in what is being said, and purpose in moving forward. Sometimes an important question will start out as an ill-defined instinct or hunch, which takes time to develop and seems risky to ask. Sometimes the effective question reflects the interviewer's own groping for coherence about what is being said and is asked in a hesitant, unsure manner.

Effective questioning is so context-bound, such a reflection of the relationship that has developed between the interviewer and the participant, that to define it further runs the risk of making a human process mechanical. To some extent, the way interviewers are as people will be the way they are as interviewers. If interviewers are the sort of people who always have to be talking, who never listen, who demand to be the center of attention most of the time, who are really not interested in other people's stories, no matter what procedures they follow in interviewing, those characteristics will probably pervade the interviewing relationship.

The most important personal characteristic interviewers must have is a genuine interest in other people. They must be deeply aware that other people's stories are of worth in and of themselves and because they offer something to the interviewer's experience. With a temperament that finds interest in others, a person has the foundation upon which to learn the techniques of interviewing and to practice its skills.

7

Interviewing as a Relationship

Interviewing is both a research methodology and a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully (Dexter, 1970; Hyman et al., 1954; Mishler, 1986). In part, each interviewing relationship is individually crafted. It is a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact. The relationship is also a reflection of the purpose, structure, and method of in-depth interviewing. For example, the fact that the participant and the interviewer meet three times over 2 or 3 weeks results in a relationship different from that which would result from a single-interview structure.

Interviewers can try to craft relationships with their participants that are like islands of interchange separate from the world's definitions, classifications, and tensions. However, individual interviewing relationships exist in a social context. Although an interviewer might attempt to isolate the interviewing relationship from that context and make it unique to the interviewer and the participant, the social forces of class, ethnicity, race, and gender, as well as other social identities, impose themselves. Although interviewers may try to ignore these social forces, they tend to affect their relationships with participants nonetheless.

INTERVIEWING AS AN "I–THOU" RELATIONSHIP

In a section of his book that is elegant even in translation, Schutz (1967) explains that one person's intersubjective understanding of another depends upon creating an "I–Thou" relationship, a concept bearing both similarities to and significant differences from the philosopher Martin Buber's use of the phrase. "Thou" is someone close to the interviewer, still

separate, but a fellow person. We recognize "Thou," according to Schutz, as another "alive and conscious human being" (p. 164). Implicit in such an "I-Thou" relationship is a shift from the interviewer's seeing the participant as an object or a type, which he or she would normally describe syntactically in the third person. Schutz goes on to say that a relationship in which each person is "Thou" oriented — that is, in which the sense of "Thou-ness" is mutual — becomes a "We" relationship.

The interviewer's goal is to transform his or her relationship with the participant into an "I-Thou" relationship that verges on a "We" relationship. In the approach to interviewing I have been discussing, the interviewer does not strive for a full "We" relationship. In such a case the interviewer would become an equal participant, and the resulting discourse would be a conversation, not an interview. In an "I-Thou" relationship, however, the interviewer keeps enough distance to allow the participant to fashion his or her responses as independently as possible.

In some approaches to participatory research, however, the interviewers do attempt to create a full "We" relationship (Griffin, 1989; Reason, 1994). Oakley (1981) argues that not doing so is manipulative and reflects a male, hierarchical model of research. I try to strike a balance, saying enough about myself to be alive and responsive but little enough to preserve the autonomy of the participant's words and to keep the focus of attention on his or her experience rather than mine.

RAPPORT

That balancing act is central to developing an appropriate rapport with the participant. I have never been completely comfortable with the common assumption that the more rapport the interviewer can establish with the participant, the better. Rapport implies getting along with each other, a harmony with, a conformity to, an affinity for one another. The problem is that, carried to an extreme, the desire to build rapport with the participant can transform the interviewing relationship into a full "We" relationship in which the question of whose experience is being related and whose meaning is being made is critically confounded.

In our community college study, one participant invited my wife and me to his house for dinner after the second interview and before the third. I had never had such an invitation from a participant in the study, and I did not quite know what to do. I did not want to appear ungracious, so we accepted. My wife and I went to dinner at his home. We had a wonderful California backyard cookout, and it was a pleasure to spend time with the participant and his family. But a few days later, when I met him at his

faculty office for the third interview, he was so warm and familiar toward me that I could not retain the distance I needed to explore his responses. I felt tentative as an interviewer because I did not want to risk violating the spirit of hospitality that he had created by inviting us to his home.

The rapport an interviewer must build in an interviewing relationship needs to be controlled. Too much or too little rapport can lead to distortion of what the participant reconstructs in the interview (Hyman et al., 1954). For the sake of establishing rapport, for example, interviewers sometimes share their own experience when they think it is relevant to the participant's. Although such sharing may contribute to building rapport, it can also affect and even distort what the participant might have said had the interviewer not shared his or her experience. The interviewing relationship must be marked by respect, interest, attention, and good manners on the part of the interviewer. The interviewer must be constantly alert to what is appropriate to the situation. As in teaching, the interviewing relationship can be friendly but not a friendship. (See Oakley, 1981, for a contrasting perspective.)

At the beginning of an interviewing relationship, I recommend erring on the side of formality rather than familiarity. (See also Hyman et al., 1954.) For example, an early step in an interviewing relationship is to ask if the participant minds being called by his or her first name. To do so without asking presumes familiarity, which can be off-putting, especially to older people. Common courtesies such as holding a door, not sitting until the person is seated, and introducing yourself again so that you make sure the participant knows to whom he or she is talking are small steps. But they all add up to expressing respect for the participant, which is central to the interview process.

Once the interview is under way, and as the participant begins to share his or her life history and details of present experience, it is crucial for the interviewer to maintain a delicate balance between respecting what the participant is saying and taking advantage of opportunities to ask difficult questions, to go more deeply into controversial subjects. In our seminar on In-Depth Interviewing and Issues in Qualitative Research, for example, one interviewer said that a participant had made remarks that reflected what the interviewer thought to be racist attitudes. At the time, which was early in her pilot project, the interviewer did not feel comfortable in following up on that aspect of what the participant had said. She hadn't yet developed a technique for exploring such a difficult subject without appearing judgmental. However, by not following up, she later realized that she was left with material which, if used, might be unfair to the participant. She decided that she could not use the material. In future interviews she would find a tactful way to encourage her partici-

pants to explore their own words further when she perceived ambiguity in their narrative.

Another reason to control the rapport an interviewer builds in an interviewing relationship is that when the interviews are concluded, the interviewing relationship shifts dramatically. It becomes more distant, less intimate, focusing on what happens to the material generated by the interview. Issues of ownership of the material can easily arise. Interviewers should agree to give a copy of the transcripts or audiotapes to the participant, who has a basic right to these. The participant may want to review the transcripts to see if there is any part with which he or she might not be comfortable and wish to have excluded from the study. This stage of the relationship is likely to be conducted by phone, letter, or e-mail. The rapport an interviewer builds during the interview must be consistent with the relationship the interviewer expects to have with the participant after the interviews are concluded. (See Griffin, 1989, for a model of an active, ongoing relationship between interviewers and participants.)

Once the interviewer writes a report on the interviews, he or she may share the report with the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to such sharing as member-checking, and they indicate that it contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility of the report. But difficult issues can arise at this point. Some interviewers give a right of review to the participant that can amount almost to a veto on how the interviewer works with, analyzes, and writes up the results of the interviewing project. Some researchers go further and suggest that the participant in the interview should also become a participant in working with the material (Griffin, 1989). The stances researchers take on this issue are wide ranging (Patai, 1987). At one end of the continuum are those who argue for a type of co-ownership. At the other are those who suggest that the relationship ends with the interview, and the only obligations that the writer has are to make sure the participants knew why they were being interviewed and the interviewer has not distorted the spirit of what the participant said.

My practice has been to offer to share with participants any material that concerns them. I especially want to know if in working with the interview data I have done anything that makes them vulnerable, or if I have presented anything that is not accurate. Except with regard to issues of vulnerability or inaccuracy, however, I retain the right to write the final report as I see it. (In her study of high schools, Lightfoot, 1983, tells of the awkward situation she encountered when participants in her study disagreed with her interpretations.)

The type of relationship the interviewer anticipates after the interview is concluded affects the nature of the relationship the interviewer nurtures during it. If the interviewer has created a full "We" relationship

in the process of the interviewing, then he or she must be prepared to deal with the consequences when the time comes to work with the material generated in an interview and report on it. To establish such a deeply sharing, mutually intimate interviewing relationship and then claim one-sided ownership of the material at the conclusion of the interview may cause problems. On the other hand, an interviewer who is explicit about the rights of the participant before the interview begins, and who controls the distance he or she keeps with the participant, establishes the condition for an equitable relationship when working with the material.

SOCIAL GROUP IDENTITIES AND THE INTERVIEWING RELATIONSHIP

Issues of equity in an interviewing relationship are affected by the social identities that participants and interviewers bring to the interview. Our social identities are affected by our experience with issues of class, race, ethnicity, and gender, and those social forces interact with the sense of power in our lives (Kanter, 1977). The interviewing relationship is fraught with issues of power — who controls the direction of the interview, who controls the results, who benefits. To negotiate these variables in developing an equitable interviewing relationship, the interviewer must be acutely aware of his or her own experience with them as well as sensitive to the way these issues may be affecting the participants.

Race and Ethnicity

In our society, with its history of racism, researchers and participants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds face difficulties in establishing an effective interviewing relationship. It is especially complex for Whites and African Americans to interview each other, but other interracial or cross-ethnic pairings can also be problematic. (To explore this important issue more deeply, see Dexter, 1970; Dollard, 1949; Hyman et al., 1954; Labov, 1972; Reese, Danielson, Shoemaker, Chang, & Hsu, 1986; Richardson et al., 1965; Song & Parker, 1995.) In addition, interviewing relationships between those of the same racial-ethnic background but of different gender, class, and age can engender tensions that inhibit the full development of an effective interviewing relationship.

That is not to say that individual interviewers and participants cannot to some extent subvert the societal context in which we do our research. Interviewers and participants of good will who are from different racial backgrounds can create a relationship that runs counter to prevailing social currents. Maintaining sensitivity to issues that trigger distrust as well

as exhibiting good manners, respect, and a genuine interest in the stories of others can go a long way toward bridging racial and ethnic barriers.

Such bridging attempts are methodologically important. Although the shared assumptions that come from common backgrounds may make it easier to build rapport, interviewing requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share, assumptions. It would be an unfortunate methodological situation if African Americans could interview only other African Americans, Latinos only other Latinos, Asian Americans only other Asian Americans, Native Americans only other Native Americans, and European Americans only other European Americans.

In my own experience, I have found that the three-interview structure goes some way toward overcoming the initial distrust that can be present when a European American interviews an African American. The three-interview structure can mitigate tensions in other cross-racial interviewing relationships as well. By returning to the participant three times, an interviewer has the opportunity to demonstrate respect, thoughtfulness, and interest in that individual, all of which can work toward ameliorating skepticism. Nonetheless, my experience is that racial politics can make interracial and cross-ethnic interviewing, no matter the structure of the interviews and the sensitivity of the interviewers, difficult to negotiate.

Of the 76 faculty and administrative participants we interviewed in our community college study (Seidman et al., 1983), only one terminated the interviews before the series was completed. That participant was a male, African American administrator at a community college who withdrew near the end of the first interview. At the time, he gave no reason. He just said that he wanted to stop.

I remember the feeling of disappointment as my colleague Sullivan and I left the interview. We searched our minds for what had precipitated his decision. I felt both guilty and disheartened and was on the verge of losing confidence in the interviewing methodology. Later, as I reflected further on the episode, I realized that our interview study had become caught up in the racial history and politics of our society. Perhaps instead of being a failure, our interview method had been working too well. As our participant had spoken of his life history, he had begun to deal with the way racism had played out in his life and his career. I think he found himself speaking more honestly to White interviewers than he cared to (Anderson, Silver, & Abramson, 1988; Cotter, Cohen, & Coulter, 1982). His withdrawing was a loss to us and our study.

Linda Miller Cleary met a similarly complex situation in her research on American Indian education. Cleary prepares teachers of secondary

English at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. She has a significant number of students who are Ojibwe and most will teach American Indian students. She developed a research project, initially to find out more about the experience of teachers of American Indian students to better prepare her students to do that work. In an interview with me in 1996, Cleary said that she felt "always suspect" whenever she sought access to American Indian educators. She said she sensed a distrust of her motives and intentions. After one series of interviews was completed, one participant asked her pointedly, "Why are you doing this?"

She was well into her research when, because of the suspicion she had faced in establishing access and in each initial interview, she realized that "people aren't going to trust me as an author." Although she felt she had been able to get beyond much of the initial distrust and gather good material in her interviews, she wanted "another perspective . . . in the process of analysis." She came to the decision that, "I really couldn't do it alone . . . the gap was too big" (L. M. Cleary, personal communication, August 11, 1996).

Facing the issue head on, Cleary solved it by inviting a colleague, Thomas Peacock, who holds the Endowed Chair of American Indian Education at her university, to join her in the research project. By teaming with a colleague who knew firsthand the complexities of their American Indian participants' experience, she took a significant step toward strengthening the equity between researchers and participants and the authority of the research. Their collaborative work is represented in their book, *Collected Wisdom: American Indian Education* (Cleary & Peacock, 1997), in which they discuss not only the subject of the research but also the significant methodological issues inherent in it.

Gender

There is evidence that interviewers and participants of different genders get different interviewing results than do those of the same gender (Hyman et al., 1954). The interviewing relationship that develops when participant and interviewer are different genders can be deeply affected by sexist attitudes and behaviors. All the problems that one can associate with sexist gender relationships can be played out in an interview. Males interviewing female participants can be overbearing. Women interviewing men can sometimes be reluctant to control the focus of the interview. Male participants can be too easily dismissive of female interviewers. Interviewers of both genders can fail to see the possibilities of whole areas of exploration if their perspectives are ideologically laden. Nor are interviews

among interviewers and participants of the same gender automatically unproblematic. They can be plagued by the false assumption of shared perspectives or a sense of competition never stated.

In addition to affecting individual relationships between interviewers and participants, sexism influences the total context of research. Interviewing research itself can be characterized as "soft" research — research not likely to yield "hard" data — and can thereby be minimized by a sexist research community (Callaway, 1981). On another level, Patai (1987) argues that if interviewers use women for their own research ends, no matter how well-intentioned the research study is, the dominant paradigm of a society's exploiting women is supported rather than challenged.

There is also the possibility of sexual exploitation in in-depth interviewing because of the sense of intimacy that can develop. Participants talk about the details of their lives while the interviewer listens attentively. A natural bond of fondness and respect develops as the interviewer and the participant explore the participant's experience. Clearly, it is important for interviewers not to exploit that bond sexually.

In one study, a research assistant told me how she had become attracted to one of her participants as a result of interviewing. She wanted to talk about her feelings and their implications for the interview process. She knew that any connection with the participant outside the interview structure would serve only to distort the interviewing relationship. She was worried that even if she had no outside contact with the participant, her fond feelings were affecting the way she asked questions. (See Hyman et al., 1954, p. 54, for another example of how the cordiality of the interviewing relationship affects the way interviewers ask questions.) It helped when I assured her that her feelings were reasonable, but I also emphasized the importance of staying focused on the purpose of the interviews.

It is possible for male and female interviewers and participants to subvert the gender-role stereotypes sexist society would have them play. Interviewers of both sexes can study transcripts of interviews they have done, reconstructing the arrangements they have made to see how they might have employed sexist assumptions in building their interviewing relationships. They can also examine those relationships by reflecting on their interviewing experience in a journal or with a peer. Most important, in the interviewing relationship itself, they can demonstrate a consciousness of sexism and concern for gender equity. (For further reading on the subject of gender and interviewing, see an excellent discussion in chap. 5 of Yow, 1994; also Edwards, 1990; Herod, 1993; Riessman, 1987; Rosser, 1992; Williams & Heikes, 1993.)

Class, Hierarchy, and Status

When interviewer and participant eye each other through the lens of class consciousness, the stories told and the experiences shared can be distorted (Hyman et al., 1954). A lack of consciousness about class issues can be injurious to both the participant and the interviewer (Sennett & Cobb, 1972).

In a discussion of class in Marxist terms, Patai (1987) described the interviewer as a hybrid of a capitalist and a laborer who is capable of treating the words of participants as commodities to be exploited. If one understands class as a function of status, education, and wealth, interviewers are often middle class and university based, interviewing those who are in some way lower on a scale of status. (Dexter, 1970, runs counter to that notion.)

When we did our study of community college faculty, I became conscious of their sensitivity to the higher education totem pole. In the context of the university, school of education faculty rank low. Some community college faculty participants, however, treated me with either an unwarranted skepticism because of my affiliation with what they perceived as the ivory tower, or an unearned deference because of my affiliation with a university, in contrast to their self-description of being "just" in a community college.

Even the use of interviewing itself can be affected by class-based assumptions. For example, Richardson et al. (1965) wrote that participants of

> low intelligence, low socio-economic status, or low status in an organized hierarchy may find it difficult to tolerate a preponderance of open questions because they are unused to talking at length spontaneously, articulately, or coherently, or because they are uncomfortable in an unstructured situation. (p. 149).

My experience has been that when participants, whatever their class background, place their work in the context of their life histories and are given the space to tell their stories, they can respond to open-ended questions. On the other hand, when class, gender, or racial tension pervades the interviewing relationship, participants are likely to be tight-lipped and restricted in their responses (Labov, 1972; Patton, 1989).

Some interviewers have a wider range of class versatility than others. Given their own life histories, they are able to operate comfortably with people lower and higher in the class structure than they are. Others' life

experience has been so homogeneous that they are comfortable only when
they are interviewing participants whose social-class experiences are simi-
lar to their own. They are reluctant to interview in settings in which they
have little experience or classes of people with whom they have had little
contact. That reluctance can sometimes result in a skewed sample of parti-
cipants being interviewed and a picture of the experience being studied
that is narrower than warranted.

Linguistic Differences

An issue embedded in many of the social relationships described above
is linguistic differences between interviewers and participants. Sometimes
English-speaking researchers interview participants for whom English is
not the first language. If interviewers are fluent in the participants' mother
tongue and interview in that language, they will subsequently face the
complexity of translation. The issue of finding the right word in English or
any other language to represent the full sense of the word the participants
spoke in their native language is demanding and requires a great deal of
care (Vygotsky, 1987).

Some doctoral students with whom I have worked who are fluent in
the native language of their participants have experimented with inter-
viewing in English and going along with their participants as they may
switch back and forth between English and their mother tongue. When
reporting on the interviews, especially in crucial segments, the researchers
sometimes report the language of the participants as spoken in the mother
tongue to honor that language and the thought patterns inherent in it.
They then provide a translation immediately following the portion spoken
in the mother tongue.

What is at issue in interviewing participants whose first language is not
that of the interviewer is the extent to which the language used by both the
participants and the interviewer affects the progress of the interview. The
thinking of both the participants and the interviewer is intertwined with
the language they are using (Vygotsky, 1987). As in most issues regarding
interviewing, there is not one right way to respond to these situations, except
to recognize the importance of language and culture to thought. With that
awareness, both interviewer and participants can experiment with ways of
talking to each other that most authentically reflect their thinking. (For fur-
ther reading on this subject, see Goldstein, 1995.)

Age

In addition to race, gender, and class, the relative ages of the partici-
pant and the interviewer may affect the type of relationship that develops

between them. Some older participants may feel uncomfortable being
interviewed by a young interviewer, especially if they feel that the inter-
viewer places them in a subordinate role (Briggs, 1986). Interviewing
participants who are much younger or much older takes a special type
of sensitivity on the part of the interviewer. He or she must know
how to connect to children or seniors without patronizing them. When
class, race, linguistic, and age differences are combined, especially in
groups of school-age children, the danger that an interviewer will
elicit distorted responses is high (Brenner et al., 1985). But when inter-
viewed skillfully and with consciousness of class, race, and age, children
can be thoughtful about their experience in and out of school and are
capable of reflection that is informative and compelling (Labov, 1972).
(For an example of effective interviewing of young adults, see Cleary,
1990, 1991.)

Elites

Of the imbalances that can occur in the relationship between inter-
viewer and participant, one of the most difficult to negotiate occurs when
researchers try to use an in-depth interviewing approach with people in
positions of power. Sally Lynne Conkright (1997) used the method de-
scribed in this book to interview 11 chief executive officers or those on the
next rung of authority in 11 significant U.S. corporations. She met the
expected problems of access, which she overcame to a considerable extent.
She also faced serious problems in carrying out her interviewing plan.
Executives who had agreed in advance to 90-minute interviews would
develop very busy schedules. By the time she arrived for the interview,
some could or would only give her a shorter amount of time.

On a different level, she noted that elites are often accustomed to
being in charge of situations in which they find themselves. A number of
her participants tried to take charge of the interviews. Sometimes, when
Conkright tried to direct the interview, she noted that her participants
became uncomfortable. "In some instances," she wrote, "the signals were
nonverbal in nature and, in other instances, the participants verbally ex-
pressed that they would direct the interview" (pp. 274–275). She had to
walk a very narrow line between asking questions in which she was inter-
ested and recognizing that such questions might threaten to lead to the
termination of the interview.

Despite these complexities, she sustained her research and learned
a great deal about both her subject and the methodology as applied to
interviewing elites. Although I see this approach to interviewing as most
appropriate for getting at the details of everyday experience of those in less
power-laden and status-oriented positions, still the attempt to gain the

inner perspective of elites is worthwhile and important. (For further read-ing on this topic, see Dexter, 1970; Hertz & Imber, 1995.)

DISTINGUISH AMONG PRIVATE, PERSONAL, AND PUBLIC

Interviewing relationships are also shaped by what the interviewer and participant deem are appropriate subjects to explore in the interview. In considering what is appropriate, interviewers may find it useful to distinguish among public, personal, and private aspects of a participant's life (Shils, 1959). The public aspect is what participants do, for example, at work or at school, in meetings, in classes, in offices where their actions are subject to the scrutiny of others. Interviewers tend to be most comfort-able exploring these public aspects of participants' experience.

Participants' private lives involve matters of intimacy, like aspects of relationships participants do not discuss with outsiders for fear of violating those relationships. Each participant or interviewer may have different boundaries for what he or she considers public, personal, and private. In one interview, I asked a participant to talk more about her engagement, which she had mentioned briefly earlier. She said to me very directly, "That's none of your business."

Participants also have personal lives that bridge their public and pri-vate experiences. Personal lives are of at least two basic types. The first is participants' subjective experience of public events. Interviewers tend to feel comfortable exploring that aspect of personal experience. Indeed, that is one of the major functions of interviewing as a research method. The second is participants' experience of events that do not occur in their public lives but in their experience with friends and family away from the workplace or school.

New interviewers tend to be less comfortable exploring experiences in this realm. They often question its relevance to the subject of their study. The dichotomy between what is personal and what is public, however, is often false. What happens in people's personal lives often affects what happens in or provides a context for their public lives and can be useful if tactfully explored in interviewing research. "May I ask," not just as a pro forma statement but seriously meant, is a preface I often put to questions when entering troubling or sensitive areas.

Sometimes interviewers shy away from exploring areas such as death and illness because they themselves are personally uncomfortable, and they assume the participant is too (Hyman et al., 1954; Rowan, 1981). If a participant mentions topics such as these, however, he or she thinks they are relevant. To ignore them or not to explore how they might relate to

the subject of the research may signal to the participant that what is most important to him or her is somehow not important to the interviewer. If the participant has risked mentioning a personal topic, my experience is that it is important to acknowledge it and to explore the relationship between that personal experience and the subject of the inquiry.

AVOID A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP

At the same time, interviewers must avoid changing the interviewing relationship into a therapeutic one. Many see a similarity between the type of open-ended, relatively nondirective interviewing that I have been discussing in this book and the type of exploration that takes place in psychotherapy. It is essential that research interviewers not confuse them-selves with therapists. The goals are different (Kahn & Cannell, 1960; Kvale, 1996, pp. 155–157). The researcher is there to learn, not to treat the participant. The participant did not seek out the researcher and is not a patient. The researcher will see the participant three times, after which their connection will substantially end. They will not have a continuing relationship in which the researcher takes some measure of ongoing re-sponsibility. Researchers are unlikely to be trained therapists. They should know both their own limits and those imposed by the structure and goal of the interviewing process. Researchers must be very cautious about ap-proaching areas of participants' private lives and personal complexities to which they are ill-equipped to respond and for which they can take no effective responsibility.

But even when researchers exercise such caution, the intimacy that can develop in in-depth interviewing sometimes threatens those limits, and a participant may find the interviewing process emotionally troubling (Griffin, 1989). Participants may start to cry in an interview. Interviewers may themselves become upset in the face of a participant's tears and not know what to do. My experience is that many times the best thing to do is nothing. Let the participant work out the distress without interfering and taking inappropriate responsibility for it. On the other hand, if the distress continues, the interviewer then has the responsibility to pull back from whatever is causing it.

In my mind, a key to negotiating potentially troubled waters is to assess how much responsibility the interviewer can effectively take in navi-gating them. In one interview, a participant referred repeatedly to a col-league's nervous breakdown. As much as I was interested in the subject, I did not follow up on it because the participant's repeated references to it troubled me. We were near the end of the third interview. I was not

planning to return to the participant's campus the next week. I would not be able to follow up if exploring the topic caused the participant emotional distress. One boundary I learned to observe was the one that marked where I could take effective responsibility for follow-up and where I could not.

RECIPROCITY

The issue of reciprocity in the interviewing relationship can be troubling. The more the interviewing relationship is charged with issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, the more complicated the problem of reciprocity can be. Patai (1987) in her study of Brazilian women, most of whom were poor, agonized over what could be perceived as inequity in her research. She wrote a book (Patai, 1988) based on her findings and gained the benefits that usually accrue from such publication. On the other hand, she felt her participants gained little tangible benefit from their cooperation with her. Rowan (1981) talks about the lack of reciprocity that can lead to alienation in research. He sees it as alienation because the researcher is separating participants from their words and then using those words to his or her own ends.

This is the most problematic aspect of interviewing to me. I am sympathetic to the argument that the researcher gets more out of the process than the participant. I know, however, and others write about (Patai, 1987; Yow, 1994) the type of listening the interviewer brings to the interview. It takes the participants seriously, values what they say, and honors the details of their lives. The reciprocity I can offer in an interview is that which flows from my interest in participants' experience, my attending to what they say, and my honoring their words when I present their experience to a larger public. Although at the conclusion of the interview I do present my participants with a small gift, that gift is only a token of my appreciation in the fullest sense of the word *token*. I use it to say thank you and to mark the conclusion of that part of our interviewing relationship. (See Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Yow, 1994, for a fuller discussion.)

EQUITY

Interviewers and participants are never equal. We can strive to reduce hierarchical arrangements, but usually the participant and the interviewer want and get different things out of the interview. Despite different purposes, researchers can still strive for equity in the process. By equity

I mean a balance between means and ends, between what is sought and what is given, between process and product, and a sense of fairness and justice that pervades the relationship between participant and interviewer.

Building equity in the interviewing relationship starts when the interviewer first makes contact with the participant. Equity means the interviewer's going out of his or her way to get the stories of people whose stories are not usually heard. It means the interviewer's not promising what cannot be delivered, and making sure to deliver what is promised. It means being explicit about the purposes and processes of the research. Equity is supported in an explicit written consent form that outlines the rights and responsibilities of the interviewer and the participant in as detailed a manner as reasonable. Equity is involved in scheduling time and place of interviews. Interviewers are asking a great deal of participants. It keeps the process fair when interviewers set up times and places that are convenient to the participant and reasonable for the interviewer. Equity is also involved in the technique of interviewing. An interviewer who is intrusive, who constantly reinforces responses he or she may like—who is really looking for corroboration of personal views rather than the story of the participant's experience—is not being fair to the purpose of in-depth interviewing. Being equitable in interviewing research means, as we see in Chapter 8, valuing the words of the participant because those words are deeply connected to that participant's sense of worth. Being equitable in interviewing research means infusing a research methodology with respect for the dignity of those interviewed.

Researchers cannot be expected to resolve all the inequities of society reproduced in their interviewing relationships, but they do have the responsibility to be conscious of them. Some would argue, though, that research in the social sciences that does not confront these problems contributes to them. (See Fay, 1987, for a review of critical research.) My own sense of the matter is that although it is difficult to do equitable research in an inequitable society, equity must be the goal of every in-depth interviewing researcher. Striving for equity is not only an ethical imperative; it is also a methodological one. An equitable process is the foundation for the trust necessary for participants to be willing to share their experience with an interviewer.

Every step of the interview process can be designed and carried out with the idea of equity in mind. But try as one may to be equitable in interviewing research, equity in interviewing is affected by factors such as racism, classism, and sexism originating outside the individual interviewing relationship or taking place within it. What I have come to grasp over the years I have been doing interviewing research is that the equity of an

interviewing relationship, and thereby the quality of the interview, is affected and sometimes seriously limited by social inequities. At the same time, individuals committed to equity in research can find a way first to become conscious of the issues and their own role in them. They can then devise methods that attempt to subvert those societal constraints. In the process they may end up being able to tell their participants' stories in a way that can promote equity.

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Analyzing, Interpreting, and Sharing Interview Material

Research based on in-depth interviewing is labor intensive. There is no substitute for studying the interviews and winnowing the almost 1 million words a study involving 25 participants might yield. (Each series of three interviews can result in 150 double-spaced pages of transcript.) In planning such a study, allow at least as much time for working with the material as for all the steps involved in conceptualizing the study, writing the proposal, establishing access, making contact, selecting participants, and doing the actual interviews.

MANAGING THE DATA

To work with the material that interviewing generates, the researcher first has to make it accessible by organizing it. Keeping track of participants through the participant information forms, making sure the written consent forms are copied and filed in a safe place, labeling audiotapes of interviews accurately, managing the extensive files that develop in the course of working with the transcripts of interviews, and keeping track of decision points in the entire process all require attention to detail, a concern for security, and a system for keeping material accessible. One goal of this administrative work is to be able to trace interview data to the original source on the interview tape at all stages of the research. Another is to be able to contact a participant readily. The simple act of misfiling a written consent form from a participant upon whose material a researcher wants to rely heavily can create hours of extra work and unnecessary anxiety.