4. The researcher employs a variety of research strategies, making sense of information collected in light of the system of meaning, gaining awareness of the theories and assumptions that guide practice, and viewing himself or herself as part of a wider cultural panorama.

5. In the end, this research involves a pedagogy of personal and social transformation.

The design of research within a critical theory approach, according to sociologist Agger (1991), falls into two broad categories: *methodological*, in that it affects the ways in which people write and read, and *substantive*, in the theories and topics of the investigator (e.g., theorize about the role of the state and culture in advanced capitalism). Methodologically, a qualitative researcher might do the following:

1. Write about the taken-for-granted interests of perspective, polemic, and politics and be explicit about them in the text.

2. Write about challenges to prevailing positivist approaches that conceal and hide key assumptions.

3. Write about the assumptions behind the literary presentation of the qualitative study.

4. Write about how the researcher's language presents his or her own voice.

5. Emphasize multiple methodologies (qualitative and quantitative) and multiple perspectives (class, race, and gender) on problems.

One example of critical theory research is the classical ethnography from Willis (1977) of the "lads" who participated in behavior (e.g., opposition to authority, informal groups, "having a laff" [p. 29]) as a form of resistance to their school. As a study of the reproduction of class identity, this research begins with an ethnography of the male white working class counter-school culture. The lads reject the system that oppressed them, and the study captures the moment of failed resistance among working class male youths in the transition from school to work. The final analysis by Willis is a discussion about the "processes of self-induction into the labour process [that] consti-

tute an aspect of the regeneration of working class culture in general, and an important example of how this culture is related in complex ways to regulative state institutions" (p. 3). As a study of the manifestations of resistance and state regulation, it is a model study of the ways in which actors come to terms with and struggle against cultural forms that dominated them (Morrow & Brown, 1994).

Feminist Approaches

The theme of domination prevails in the feminist literature as well, but the subject matter is gender domination within a patriarchal society. Feminist research also embraces many of the tenets of postmodern critiques as a challenge to current society. In **feminist research approaches**, the goals are to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative. It is a complex area of inquiry, with numerous frameworks (e.g., male oriented, white feminist oriented, able-bodied female oriented) and difficult issues (e.g., the absence and invisibility of women, who can be "knowers") (Olesen, 1994).

One of the leading scholars of this approach, Lather (1991), comments on the essential perspectives of this framework. Feminist researchers see gender as a basic organizing principle that shapes the conditions of their lives. It is "a lens that brings into focus particular questions" (Fox-Keller, 1985, p. 6). The questions feminists pose relate to the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness. The aim of this ideological research is to "correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (Lather, 1991, p. 71). Given these goals, the foci of questions, and themes, the feminist researcher might engage in procedures such as the following:

▼ *Conduct sequential interviews in an interactive, dialogic manner that entails self-disclosure on the part of the researcher and fosters a sense of collaboration.*

▼ *Conduct group interviews that provide potential for deeper probing and reciprocally educative encounters.*

- ▼ *Negotiate meanings of results with participants in the study.*

- ▼ *Strive to address issues of false consciousness and conceptual determinism.*

- ▼ *Be self-reflexive about what researchers experience as they conduct research.*

Another writer, Stewart (1994), translates feminist critiques and methodology into procedural guides. She suggests that researchers need to look for what has been left out in social science writing and to study women's lives and issues such as identities, sex roles, domestic violence, abortion activism, comparable worth, affirmative action, and the way in which women struggle with their social devaluation and powerlessness within their families. Also, researchers need to consciously and systematically include their own roles or positions and assess how they impact their understandings of a woman's life. In addition, she views women as having agency, the ability to make choices and resist oppression, and she suggests that researchers need to inquire into how a woman understands her gender, acknowledging that gender is a social contract that differs for each individual. Stewart highlights the importance of studying power relationships and an individual's social position and how they impact women. Finally, she sees each woman as different and recommends that scholars avoid the search for a unified or coherent self or voice.

THEORY USE AND THE FIVE TRADITIONS

Another perspective that researchers might use is that of theories. These **social science theories** provide an explanation, a predication, and a generalization about how the world operates. They may be posed by researchers at the broad philosophical level or at the more concrete substantive level. I now address the question: To what extent do qualitative researchers use a social science theory to guide their studies or frame questions in each of the five traditions of inquiry? Flinders and Mills (1993) ask a similar question: Should a theoretical lens frame the study, thus "raising questions and suggesting points of view"?

"Before"   E. P.   B. C.   G.T.   "After"
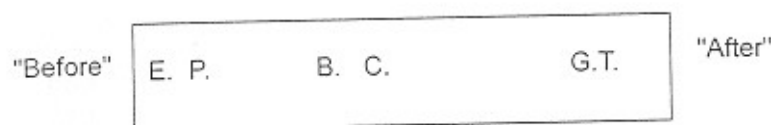
Figure 5.1   Extent of Theory Use in the Five Traditions
NOTE: B = biography; P = phenomenology; GT = grounded theory; E = ethnography; C = case study.

(p. 49). Undoubtedly, I can only answer this question within the context of a particular study. But it is helpful, I believe, for anyone designing a study to consider how theory is used, broadly speaking, within each of the five traditions of inquiry. I think that some general guidelines can be advanced, and I illustrate these guidelines with the five article reviews presented in Chapter 3.

I conceptualize the five traditions of inquiry on a continuum, as shown in Figure 5.1. Taking a cue from a discussion with Wolcott (personal communication, February 13, 1993), I can array the traditions on this continuum according to whether they are used before the study (i.e., before asking questions and gathering data) or after the study (i.e., after data collection).

A biography. I position biography toward the middle of the continuum because theory use varies considerably in biographical studies. For example, Heilbrun (1988) believes the biographies should be framed at the outset by feminist theory. Moreover, Willis's (1977) study draws heavily on cultural theory at the beginning. Traditional models of biographical writing rely on studies that add to the theoretical knowledge in the social science (Denzin, 1989a; Helling, 1988). Perhaps less obvious, Angrosino (1994), in his sketch of Vonnie Lee, draws on anthropological-cultural themes. On the other hand, as an alternative to the traditional model, the interpretive approach of Denzin (1989a, 1989b) relies less on social science theories and turns to the meaning of experiences by the persons who experience them. Thus, in this approach, the investigator may not begin the study with a theoretical perspective that guides the study.

A phenomenology. On the continuum, I place phenomenology at the "before" end. For a phenomenologist, an a priori decision is made that he or she will examine the *meaning of experiences* for individuals. Thus, an individual starts into the field with a strong orienting framework, albeit more of a philosophical perspective than a distinct social science theory, although both provide explanations for the real world. This perspective, however, informs what will be studied and how it will be studied. I already have reviewed these core ideas in Chapter 4, but they are based on the premise that human experience makes sense to those who live it, prior to all interpretations and theorizing. Objective understanding is mediated by subjective experience, and that human experience is an inherent structural property of the experience itself, not constructed by an outside observer (Dukes, 1984). For example, in the Riemen (1986) study of caring interaction, the author specifies early in the study the philosophical grounds of phenomenology that guide the study.

A grounded theory study. At the most extreme end of the continuum, toward the "after" end, I place grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) are clear that one collects and analyzes data before using theory in a grounded theory study. This explains, for example, the women's sexual abuse study by Morrow and Smith (1995) in which they generate the theory through data collection, pose it at the end, and eschew prescribing a theory at the beginning of the study. In my own studies, I have refrained from advancing a theory at the beginning of my grounded theory research, generated the theory through data collection and analysis, posed the theory as a logic diagram, and introduced contending and contrasting theories with the model I generate at the end of my study (Creswell & Brown, 1992; Creswell & Urbom, 1997).

An ethnography. I see ethnography as an approach in which researchers bring a strong cultural lens to their study. Although this lens shapes their initial observations and questions in the field, it may be moderated and changed during fieldwork. Thus, I place ethnography at the "before" end of the continuum. For example, as mentioned by Fetterman (1989), most ethnographers use one of two cultural theories: ideational theories, which suggest that change is a result of mental activities and ideas, or materialistic theories, which

hold that material conditions, such as resources, money, and modes of production, are prime movers. In Wolcott's (1994a) Principal Selection Committee study, he explores the cultural theme of the role behavior of both the prospective principals being interviewed and the committee conducting the interviews. Later, at the end of the study, we learn that one behavior exhibited by the committee was "variety-reducing" behavior.

A case study. I see qualitative case studies that employ theory in different ways, and so I position case studies at the midpoint on the continuum. Social science theories might be absent from the study with a focus on a description of the case and its issues (e.g., Stake, 1995), used to guide the study in an explanatory way (e.g., Yin, 1989), or employed toward the end of a study (e.g., Asmussen & Creswell, 1995). Stake's (1995) qualitative case study of reform in Harper School illustrates a descriptive, issue-oriented case study. The study begins by addressing issues of school reform and then a description of the school, the community, and the neighborhood. The format of description and issues continues throughout the study, and my assessment is that theory does not come into the study. On the other hand, a theory shapes the direction of McCormick's (1994) study. The study begins with the definition of a "nonreader" and then proceeds to the "theoretical bases for the study" (p. 158), framed within an interactive theory of reading ability and disability that predicts that failures and successes in literacy learning are related to external and internal factors. The study then proceeds to explore the experiences of an $8\frac{1}{2}$-year-old child. In our gunman case (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995), we do not position the study within any particular theoretical camp before data collection. However, after data collection, analysis, and formation of a theoretical model, we introduce theoretical perspectives of psychosocial and organizational perspectives to compare and contrast with our theoretical model, thus advancing a "theory-after" perspective.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I situated qualitative research within the larger discussion about philosophical and theoretical frameworks that investiga-

tors bring to their studies. It is a complex area, and one that I can only begin to sketch with some clarity. I see, however, that the basic philosophical assumptions relate to ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology as central features of all qualitative studies. Furthermore, ideological perspectives often guide such studies, drawn broadly from postmodern concerns and specifically from orientations such as critical theory and feminism. These perspectives create issues for examination as well as procedures for conducting research. Finally, looking across the five types of traditions discussed in this book, I see that authors use social science theories to guide their studies in varying degrees. I find them at various points on a continuum representing whether the theory is used before the investigator poses questions and collects data or after data collection. As a general guide, I position the five traditions on a continuum and discuss the use of theory for each, reflecting on studies introduced in Chapter 3 and other illustrations of qualitative inquiry.

▼ ADDITIONAL READINGS

Several writers, in addition to Guba and Lincoln (1988), discuss the paradigm assumptions of qualitative research. In counseling psychology, Hoshmand (1989) reviews these assumptions. In education, see Sparkes (1992) or Cunningham and Fitzgerald (1996). In management, see Burrell and Morgan (1979) or Gioia and Pitre (1990).

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis*. London: Heinemann.

Cunningham, J. W., & Fitzgerald, J. (1996). Epistemology and reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 31*(1), 36-60.

Gioia, D. A., & Pitre, E. (1990). Multiparadigm perspectives on theory building. *Management Review, 15*, 584-602.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1988). Do inquiry paradigms imply inquiry methodologies? In D. M. Fetterman (Ed.), *Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education* (pp. 89-115). New York: Praeger.

Hoshmand, L. L. S. T. (1989). Alternative research paradigms: A review and teaching proposal. *The Counseling Psychologist, 17*(1), 3-79.

Sparkes, A. C. (1992). The paradigms debate: An extended review and celebration of differences. In A. C. Sparkes (Ed.), *Research in physical education and sport: Exploring alternative visions* (pp. 9-60). London: Falmer.

For an introduction to postmodern thinking in the social sciences, see Rosenau (1992), Slife and Williams (1995), and the journal article by Bloland (1995).

Bloland, H. G. (1995). Postmodernism and higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 66*, 521-559.

Rosenau, P. M. (1992). *Post-modernism and the social sciences: Insights, inroads, and intrusions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Slife, B. D., & Williams, R. N. (1995). *What's behind the research? Discovering hidden assumptions in the behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

For critical theory, see the following articles that provide an introduction to the subject: Bloland (1995), Agger (1991), and Carspecken and Apple (1992). For book-length works, see Morrow and Brown (1994), a useful book for drawing the connection between critical theory and methodology. Another book-length work that takes the critical theory discussion into ethnography is Thomas (1993).

Agger, B. (1991). Critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism: Their sociological relevance. In W. R. Scott & J. Blake (Eds.), *Annual review of sociology* (Vol. 17, pp. 105-131). Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews.

Bloland, H. G. (1995). Postmodernism and higher education. *Journal of Higher Education, 66*, 521-559.

Carspecken, P. F., & Apple, M. (1992). Critical qualitative research: Theory, methodology, and practice. In M. L. LeCompte, W. L.