

# NOTE TAKING

## B15. From Barry MacDonald Side A

DATA GENERATION	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Structured roles. Working relationship. Question/Answer style. Episodic discourse. Interviewer as informed questioner and ethnographer of communication.	Only what is 'finished' and valued is recorded, so interviewee's stumbles, confusions, incoherences, irrelevancies are weeded out or improved and polished. Professional control of the record. Penetrative of meaning and salience. Parsimonious.	Reductionist. Interviewee deference to recording task constrains natural discourse, invites closure and conservatism and resultant lack of penetration. Reduced non-verbal contact.
Fairness	Private except for what is noted--and remains so. Open notebook offers interviewee cumulative evidence of data value. (Even closed notes indicate selection criteria.) Time out to write and check entries enhances interviewee control of testimony.	Low risk testimony the norm. Affords the security of the conventional recording medium. Emphasis on role performance rather than role experience protects the person.	No chance to reconsider testimony or its representation. Tendency for interviewer's structures to organize the data. Reliance upon interviewer's skill with shorthand/encoding.
Validity	Emphasis on public outcomes minimizes lazy, careless or unsupportable testimony. But, no objective record; limited verbatim data.	Non-verbal as well as verbal components of communication taken into account. Interviewer uses knowledge and skills to cross-check, represent other viewpoints, challenge testimony.	Little raw data survives. Most data have been treated at source in some way. Difficult to respect informal, non-propositional forms of knowledge and understanding.
DATA PROCESSING	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Negotiation of noted summary in biographic form for improvement and release. Interviewee invited to: a) authorize the representation, b) rewrite, c) add.	Summaries facilitate faster data negotiation and clearance. Economical in time and cost. Clearance facilitated as summary approximates to recall of event.	Difficult to use data except in individual interview packages. Paucity of raw data. Understandings of data prematurely fixed. No re-selection of raw data possible.
Fairness	Absence of high risk data reduces need for confidentiality. Joint arbitration of processed accounts. Interviewee can totally reject the account as inconsistent with his recall of event.	Nature of summary affords less threatening accounts. Summaries evidence evaluator's style and likely use of data--signals that inform and 'arm' respondent against later abuse. Economical, intelligible forms facilitate interviewee task in negotiating clearance.	Packaged nature of summaries deters from deleting/adding to accounts. Respondents' private interests under-represented. Empathy/sympathy with interviewee at mercy of writer's skill. Lack of independent record may lead a) strong interviewees to disclaim account b) weak interviewees to accept account.
Validity	High premium places upon interviewer's skill and integrity in selection, analysis and synthesis of data. Accounts of particular testimony structured in terms of their contribution to generalized validity of program overview.	Rich data on context of response. Interviewer's skill, interests and overall knowledge enable valuation, validation and rationalization of data.	Interviewer error/bias in generation compounded at advanced processing stage. Lack of objective evidence to substantiate analysis. Vulnerable to facile causal inference. Autobiography treated as biography
DATA REPORTING	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Biographical portrayal or narrative account of the program experience, with individual cameos. Thematic or issues organization. Interviews treated piecemeal or as epitomes of the program story.	Condensed and susceptible to summary. Complex features noted but integrated. Commonalities emphasized. Parsimonious use of raw data to support or illustrate. Offers a synthesis of 'understandings'.	Individuals submerged in overview or lost in 'group' perspectives. An outsider's account of insiders.
Fairness	De-emphasis on individual testimony. Opportunities to comment, adverse comments noted and reported, usually as addenda.	Individuals protected because their testimonies are subsumed in framework of understanding.	Interviewees dependent on sympathetic evaluator as spokesperson for their realities. Importance of individuals as actors diminished. Interviewees deskilled as critics by literary construction and by lack of source data record.
Validity	Emphasis on contextualization, coherence, contingency. Inherent logical forms in summarizing afford critique. Constructs explicit.	Interviewer, with skills, interest and knowledge, is the most qualified to judge authenticity, relatedness and resulting hierarchies of data importance. Interviewer's commitment is to the 'greater truth.' Interviewer accountable to academic peers.	Loss of individual voices. Final reports are summaries of summaries--high possibility of gross reductionism, compounded error and heavy skewing. Reliance on interviewer as story-teller increases systematic bias. No objective raw data to support the account.