

TAPING

B15. From Barry MacDonald Side B

DATA GENERATION	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Personalized relationship. Conversational style. Continuous discourse. Sustained multi-sensory communication. Interviewer as listener.	Naturalistic. Prolific. Penetrative of experience. Tolerant of ambiguity, anecdotalism, inconclusiveness.	Selective but mindless record. Data overload. Favors the articulate. Machine-phobia. Visible data lost.
Fairness	Confidential but on-the-record. Interviewee control emphasized, but hazards unknown, and minimal indication of the value or likely use of the data.	Testimony as 'draft.' Authority vested in objective record. Emphasis on generation maximizes opportunity to testify.	High risk testimony encouraged. Consequences of disclosure difficult to estimate. Over-reliant on interviewer integrity and interviewee judgment.
Validity	Insulated from consequences. Structured by the truth-holder. Told to a person.	Raw data preserved in verifiable form. Stimulus as well as response recorded. Time to search for truths. Freedom to tell. Safe responses quickly exhausted and superseded. Dissimulation hard to sustain under continuous observation.	Off-the-cuff data. Freedom to lie. Pressure on interviewee to be 'interesting.' Machine-phobia. Over-reliant on interviewee self-knowledge.
DATA PROCESSING	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Record transcribed. Transcript sent to interviewee for improvement and release. Interviewee invited to: a) amend or delete, b) extend, develop, c) prioritize, indicate high risk data. Uncontentious data may be summarized. Deadline for return stipulated.	Data retain much of their original form. Considered testimony. Inaccuracies corrected. Additional data obtained. More clues to interviewee's values and valuables, a guide to negotiable reporting. Interviewee's responsibility for the product is explicit.	Costly. Time-consuming. Obsolescent. Loss of valuable data. Inadequacy of verbal record.
Fairness	Negotiation confidential. Interviewee the arbiter. Access to record. Governed by agreed rules. But 'release' can be seen as a 'chicken run' test for the foolhardy.	Interviewee rights respected. Time and opportunity given to change testimony, to calculate risks and benefits. Interviewee free to consult others, to take advice. Possession of transcript and agreement constitute insurance against abuse.	Interviewee asked to release not knowing: a) how the data will be reported, b) norms of disclosure. Interviewee may be poor judge of own interests. Transcripts lower self-esteem.
Validity	Characterized by set sequence of moves open to scrutiny. Based on objective record.	Depends on the argument that, given the power and the responsibility for making known their own truths, interviewees will make more effort to do so.	No data on the context of response. Relies overmuch on the interviewee's belief in and commitment to the research mission.
DATA REPORTING	CHARACTERISTICS	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Effectiveness	Aspires to theatrical form of oral history. Interviews provide subscripts in program drama, interwoven in chronological, scene-by-scene construction. Draft showing data in context negotiated simultaneously with interviewees. Draft rewritten in response to respondent critiques. Final report public.	Naturalistic autobiographical data have inherent dramatic form. Rashomon effect—multiple perspectives. Dramatic imperative overrides interviewee's discretionary impulse. Surrogate experience for the reader. Yields better understandings of what has happened, challenges social beliefs underlying program policy and action.	Slow delivery. Lacking in scientific respectability. Inconclusiveness. Over-lengthy due to irreducible obligations to individuals. Costly to produce and disseminate.
Fairness	Draft report confidential to interviewee group. Re-written to satisfy interviewee criticism. But in negotiation, the researcher presses: a) audience concerns and needs and b) dramatic values.	Interviewee participation. Form of the report foreshadowed by the form of the interview. Individual testimony highly valued. Natural language maximizes accessibility to non-specialist readers and to subjects.	Researcher allocates 'star' and 'support' status. Researcher alone has all the data. Interviewee cannot retract released data.
Validity	Individual bias, censorship, inaccuracy subject to correction through consultation with knowledgeable and multi-variate constituency. Account open to external challenge based on cited testimony or back-up tapes.	'Pluralist' endorsement of account as accurate, relevant, balanced. Triangulation of oral histories. Autobiographical emphasis. Appeals to readers' own experience.	Context of generation disappears. Role and influence of evaluator under-emphasized. Formal imperatives override substantive. Genre makes the account dismissable as factoid.

