

As you collect data:

### 1. After each interview

- a. Be sure to leave time shortly after the interview, so you can carefully read through your notes, filling in things you left out and clarifying words that are hard to read. Keep anything you fill in at this time clearly separate from what you wrote down initially -- e.g., use a different color ink.
- b. Write down your own impressions of the interview. Was the person giving serious thought to your questions? Did any question seem disturbing? Hard to answer?
- c. Typing the interview
  - i. Type your notes as soon as possible after the interview. You may remember more as you do this. Again, keep what you add clearly separate. I use parentheses.
  - ii. Consider adding "codes" for topics covered as you type your notes. If you do this, you can use "find" in WORD to quickly locate particular parts of each interview. [There are computer programs for qualitative analysis of interview notes, but I doubt that you will want to learn how to use them. Reading and rereading interviews -- and using FIND -- should be enough.
  - iii. You also can mark statements that you expect to quote in the final paper.

### 2. And what did you find? Coding informal interviews, responses to "open" questions, titles, articles, etc...

- a. I find it useful to first select one or two key topics or variables, and then read through the interviews to see what each person said on that topic/variable. As I do this, I make notes about each person's "take" on the topic, and look for people saying essentially the same thing, but, of course, in different words. This process can produce a small list of rather abstract "categories" that help me make sense of the data. Elliott Liebow describes this process in a chapter from *Tell Them Who I Am* that is on electronic reserve. Chuck Suchar (1997) discusses the process using many photographs; this *Qualitative Sociology* article is on reserve.
- b. In my study of artists, I looked for their perceptions of suburbs, and I found most of them emphasized one of three perceptions: (a) suburb as myth (of a perfect life), (b) suburb as context of everyday life, and (c) suburbanization as a process that destroys valued physical environments. There are, of course, many variations within each of the three broad categories. I also can categorize these perceptions from "very positive toward suburbs" to "very negative." etc. I record these "codes" for each artist on a separate code sheet or on an index card.

### 3. Analysis.

- a. Some of you are doing more quantitative analyses than others. Even with open interviews, it is useful to identify important variables, develop a set of non-overlapping categories that provide one place for each answer, and assign either numbers or words to each category. SPSS allows alphabetic codes. Thus you can code gender as M or F, as male, female, or as 0, 1. When you construct a table, SPSS uses your code to "label" each category.

It is easy to construct two-variable tables using SPSS. This does NOT mean a final paper full of tables. Sometimes a table simply lets you "see" what you have more clearly. You know *why* you are saying that "most" or "about half" said xxx, while only one or two said zzz.

- b. For this kind of analysis, you can use EXCEL or SPSS. The first screen on SPSS is a blank data file. You can use one row for each person you interview, and "name" each column for a variable. It is easy to turn this "screen" into a small SPSS data file, and then to construct tables using crosstabs. If you enter data in EXCEL, it is easy to convert the EXCEL file to an SPSS file. Be sure to include variable labels (8 or fewer characters) in your EXCEL file, and to include these when you move the data file to SPSS.