Less marketing and more scholarship

Eileen Gambrill

Misunderstandings of the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative research have been encouraged by an either–or framing of the domain. Seven interrelated reasons for this either–oring are suggested, including focusing on method rather than purpose, different beliefs about how and if knowledge can be acquired, confusing the creation of ideas with their testing, misunderstandings of science, cognitive biases, a marketing rather than scholarly approach to knowledge development, and goals and contingencies that compete with sound scholarship. Less marketing and more scholarship are recommended.

Key words: **criticism; qualitative methods; quantitative methods; scientific methods**

Eileen Gambrill, PhD, is professor, School of Social Welfare, University of California, 120 Haviland Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720.

The terms "qualitative" and "quantitative" research refer to different kinds of data collection methods that may be associated with different views of how knowledge can be discovered and what knowledge is. The purpose of the Riessman (1994c) and Sherman and Reid (1994b) books is to pull together a variety of qualitative research methods that will be usable and valuable in social work. As requested by the editor, I will use this as an opportunity to discuss qualitative methods using the content in these books and others to highlight points. Although some of the concerns discussed are echoed in some of the literature on qualitative research (including the books by Riessman and Sherman and Reid), their reflection in other material calls for their discussion.

EITHER–ORING AND ITS DYSFUNCTIONAL EFFECTS

Misunderstandings about the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative methods have been encouraged by the framing of the domain in two categories (qualitative and quantitative). This dichotomy and its basis place the carriage before the horse; the focus is on method, rather than purpose. The editors of both books call for more integration of methods and less dichotomizing. The classification of data collection methods into two categories (quantitative and qualitative) may make sense from a perspective of arranging courses and may serve to highlight what each cluster of methods offers. For example, I took an excellent course on qualitative data analysis from William Hayes while I was a student at the University of Michigan. (He is an authority on statistics and author of a well-known statistics text.) At no point in this course or in my educational career were quantitative and qualitative methods viewed as opposing, uncomplimentary approaches to understanding the universe.

Disadvantages of either–oring include obscuring opportunities to use helpful mixes of data collection methods, encouraging stratagems to force a contrast that does not represent what exists, and encouraging "discourse" devoted to trying to persuade people that the dichotomy is real. Complementary contributions and

CCC Code:1070-5309/95 $3.00

interesting links between qualitative and quantitative changes and methods are obscured in polarized discussions. For example, detailed case studies, usually identified as a qualitative method, can be used to complement quantitative descriptions (see Burnette, 1994). In addition, data collection methods do not necessarily fall into either one category or the other.

Polarizing positions is a well-known propaganda strategy used to create and perpetuate false beliefs. False dichotomies can only be maintained by exaggerating differences and ignoring overlaps. For example, many tasks described as necessary by qualitative researchers (for example, Maluccio & Fein, 1994) describe what any researcher must do in certain settings, such as understand the organization in which research is conducted and make positive contacts with involved staff. Such activities are not unique to qualitative research. As always, it is informative to ask, What function does a pattern of behavior or style of discourse serve? Are the reasons given (for example, that qualitative research provides a richer view that more accurately describes many voices compared to quantitative methods) those that best account for this either–oring?

Argument as inquiry is often not taught and encouraged in educational programs. Perhaps this is why discussions of qualitative and quantitative research often linger at the polemical level. I suggest seven interrelated reasons for this either–oring: (1) a focus on method rather than purpose, (2) different beliefs about if and how knowledge can be acquired, (3) confusion of the creation of ideas with their testing, (4) lack of knowledge about science, (5) cognitive biases, (6) a marketing rather than scholarly approach to knowledge development, and (7) goals and contingencies that compete with sound scholarship.

FOCUS ON METHOD RATHER THAN PURPOSE

In her preface, Riessman (1994b) emphasizes that the selection of methods depends on the question. I agree. However, this thoughtful view is not reflected in many descriptions of qualitative methods. That is, the methods selected are not necessarily those that will provide answers to the questions posed. Purpose is central to reasoning: What is the purpose of thinking about a certain topic? What is the question? (Paul, 1993). Being guided by purpose will provide guidelines about what kind of method will provide data that help answer the question. Every research method is limited in the kinds of questions it can address successfully. Purpose will suggest the kinds of evidence that will test different kinds of claims. If our purpose is to communicate the emotional complexity of a certain kind of experience (for example, the death of an infant), then qualitative methods may be needed (for example, detailed case examples, thematic analyses of journal entries, open-ended interviews at different times). But even here, quantitative data may add to understanding. We can, for example, determine the percentage of individuals who experience certain patterns of grieving and to what effect. One way to avoid the dysfunctional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methods is to concentrate on purpose and to apply the variety of terms that are in long-term use to describe the different purposes (for example, descriptive, evaluative, hypothesis testing).

BELIEFS ABOUT IF AND HOW KNOWLEDGE CAN BE ACQUIRED

Selection of data collection methods is associated with beliefs about if and how knowledge can be acquired and what kind. Those who favor qualitative methods often say they want to "give voice" to all actors in a situation, to hear what they say, to understand their point of view and their feelings. They may assume that some methods are more true, reflexive, rich, or significant than other methods, which are cold, mechanistic, rigid, and so on. If the goal is to describe the beliefs held by particular individuals, this is one matter. However, as Phillips (1987, 1992) noted, qualitative researchers are often interested in understanding causes, and they generally do intend their findings to be taken as accurate. He describes concerns in all research (qualitative as well as quantitative), particularly when causes are sought.

Phillips (1987, 1992) pointed out that many qualitative researchers claim that there is no "truth" but still want their particular account to be believed without providing any evidence that it is accurate. For example, in the chapter "Making Sense of Marital Violence: One Woman's Narrative," Riessman (1994a) states that "narratively telling enables her [an abused woman] to transform her consciousness, to name the abuse, to interpret it as a question, to reexperience her anger and to make the transition from victim to survivor" (p. 114). Where is the evidence that this is so? We must ask about any research findings (qualitative or quantitative), Why should we accept them as accurate?

Phillips (1987) suggested that Kuhn's (1970) idea of clashing paradigms (the view that one paradigm cannot be evaluated from the perspective of another) has been used to reject criteria shown to be of value in testing claims. This idea has been used as an excuse to do whatever one wishes with little regard for evidentiary status. Rodwell and Woody (1994), echoing Kuhn, say that "facts" have no meaning except within some value

framework; hence, there cannot be an "objective" assessment of any proposition.

This confuses values external to and those internal to science. Values internal to science are those generally accepted in science (for example, testing assumptions via rigorous systematic investigation). External values are what people think should and should not be and how people should and should not behave.

One of the purposes of the Sherman and Reid book is to expand the rules of knowledge development. This seems to mean accepting claims based on criteria such as consensus and unfounded authority that have been recognized as common informal fallacies for hundreds of years (Damer, 1994). Phillips (1992) suggested that the topic of "truth" has a similar status today that the topic of sex had in Victorian times: Simply mentioning the word can get one into trouble.

Problems of Bias

Calling a study qualitative does not magically remove potential sources of bias that may gravely limit the accuracy of claims. This is recognized in some articles in these books (for example, Reid, 1994). It sometimes seems to be assumed on the part of qualitative researchers that objectivity is achieved with interview data. In fact, research shows that there is a complex interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Self-reports of clients or significant others may be incomplete or incorrect (for example, Carr et al., 1994). The interviewer may shape the narratives offered. The potential for bias and misunderstanding grows as the differences between interviewers and interviewees grow and as what is seen and heard is filtered through a particular unquestioned and perhaps unrecognized point of view. A certain narrative may be elicited in subtle ways and may not be the one that is accurate or most likely to help a client enhance the quality of his or her life (Tavris, 1992). Stories may even be made up to impress gullible researchers (see critiques of Margaret Mead's work). No contributor to either the Riessman or the Sherman and Reid volume mentions Loftus's critiques of self-report (Loftus, 1982, 1993) or the incisive summaries of research related to the influence of cognitive biases on judgments (for example, Dawes, 1988; Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

Proponents of qualitative research call "for the return to the 'robustness of naturalistic research' in which experienced practitioners systematically study clinical practice in its full complexity without altering it for research purposes" (Heineman Pieper, quoted in Sherman & Reid, 1994a, p. 5). "Without altering" apparently refers to not experimentally controlling or distorting conditions. However, both interviewers and observers are subject to a variety of biases that may distort what is seen or change what occurs. It is well accepted in science that some things cannot be studied without altering them. It is generally accepted in the natural sciences that observation is theory laden and therefore subject to bias: "It is now recognized more clearly than ever before that our human judgments about what is true are fallible and subject to constant revision. It is recognized that we cannot even be sure that our constant revisions are bringing us nearer to the truth" (Phillips, 1992, pp. 108–109).

Phillips (1992) argued that qualitative researchers underestimate the potential for bias and error in their work, especially when making causal assumptions. He pointed out that although many qualitative researchers may make efforts to decrease threats such as selection and sample bias, others do not. He pointed out that although there has been a "great freeing-up" regarding what counts as evidence for and against the truth of a testable hypotheses (p. 108), this does not mean that all beliefs are equally valid: "No where in the mainstream of philosophy . . . is it held that we are free to believe whatever we want, that there are no constraints on belief. . . . A search for accuracy does not have room for multiple contradictory realities all of which are true at the same time" (p. 109) (see also Asimov, 1989). As he noted, not everyone who proposes an alternative reality is correct. A person may be deluded or simply in error. This is not to say (as Phillips noted) that phenomena cannot be examined from many points of view (for example, physiological, psychological, sociological, evolutionary). They often are.

Phillips (1992) highlighted methodological problems that he believed are particularly serious in qualitative research, although by no means confined to such research. Consider the theory-laden nature of observation. Some degree of control has to be exercised to control bias and to identify causal factors. Phillips noted that the qualitative researcher who seeks causes has to become an experimenter (even if the experiments are not true, randomized ones): "In short, naked observation is generally a poor device for warranting causal claims, or for warranting advice on intervention or on future policy (for such advice itself is dependent upon having causal knowledge of situations). Many of the newer qualitative methodologists have not seriously grappled with the difficult problems here" (pp. 112–113).

One of the purposes of qualitative studies described in Sherman and Reid's introduction is to allow readers to see for themselves how data were obtained in order to evaluate it. Other writers have also emphasized the need for clear descriptions of procedures

(Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, we would expect to find clear descriptions of goals, data collection methods, samples, and key concepts. But often we do not. There is surprisingly little pursuit of "triangulation," which is highlighted as being of value in discussions of qualitative research, in many qualitative reports (for example, Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). Triangulation refers to gathering information about validity via use of multiple data sources. In a report on emic and etic perspectives (Sands & McClelland, 1994), we are told that there was a year-long observation period during which 31 preassessment team meetings of two teams were observed and in which "researchers observed and videotaped complete evaluations of five of the 31 cases" (p. 34). We do not know if the 31 meetings represent all that occurred during the year or, if not, how the 31 were selected. Nor do we know the basis on which the five cases were selected.

Confusing Truth and Credibility

Phillips (1992) argued that qualitative researchers confuse truth with credibility. He used the term "credibility" to mean plausibility: Is something possible to believe? He noted, "Credibility is a scandalously weak and inappropriate surrogate for truth or veracity—under appropriate circumstances any nonsense at all can be judged as 'credible'" (p. 117). Rodwell and Woody (1994) describe one of the "constructivist assumptions for the evaluation process" as follows: "'Truth' is a matter of consensus among informed and sophisticated constructors, not a correspondence with an objective reality" (p. 317). Those favoring a given system may have a high degree of consensus about the "logic" of a system (how it "works," as with astrology), but their system may have little overlap with the "logic of the real world" as determined by systematic investigation (as with astronomy).

Questions about whether a real world exists can be sidestepped by focusing on the corrective feedback provided when assumptions are tested through making risky predictions that can be falsified (Paul, 1993; Popper, 1972). Reid (1994) states, "As we know, much of our knowledge is built from agreements among practitioners. However, this knowledge still has an empirical foundation since it is derived from the experiences of practitioners" (pp. 466–467). He suggests that in social work, criteria for evaluating truth and claims about knowledge "are best seen as based in the professional community at large" (p. 466). However, as Phillips (1992) argued, "Believability, credibility, consensus, coherence—all these things are no doubt important and a piece of research would be the better for possessing them, but these things to do not guarantee the truth of the research conclusion, indeed, they might not even be indicators of truth" (p. 119). These criteria have been viewed as suspect for generations and for good reason. Nor is experience a sound guide (see Dawes, 1988, 1994). Phillips (1992) accused many writers of playing word games (for example, using euphemisms such as "justified" for the word "valid").

The history of science and medicine shows that the incredible may be true and the credible false. Propagandists throughout history have persuaded citizens to accept questionable claims and pursue harmful actions by appealing to consensus (what "we all believe," what "everyone knows"). A "makes sense" epistemology is not a sound guide to accuracy. At no point in either book is a cogent argument made undermining commonly accepted views in the natural sciences about the basis on which different kinds of claims can be made (for example, the accuracy of description or beliefs about causes). A natural science approach does not imply that there is a search for final "truths." Essentialism is not a part of science. Nor does this approach mean that all beliefs are equally well supported. Some beliefs have more support than others. As Asimov (1989) noted, it is unlikely that we will discover in the next 500 years that the earth is really donut shaped with a hole in the middle.

CONFUSION OF THE CREATION OF IDEAS WITH THEIR TESTING

One way in which method and purpose are confused in the literature on qualitative methods is discarding quantitative methods because they are allegedly not useful in the creation of ideas. Riessman (1994b) states that one of her explicit purposes is "to reduce the monopoly of numeric methods on the production of ideas in social work" (p. xv). Popper (1972) argued that ideas can (and do) come from many sources and that what is important is not where they come from, but whether they can be falsified. Qualitative researchers are very interested in the generation of ideas about what may be true. They appear less interested in testing whether assumptions are accurate and accept a justification rather than a falsification point of view (Popper, 1972) (for example Polkinghorne, 1991; Reid, 1994). They seek corroboration by confirmation, rather than seeing whether assumptions can be falsified by making and testing risky predictions. This accounts for their interest in consistency. A search for consistencies encourages a focus on confirming rather than falsifying instances. Scientific ways of testing are often rejected on the ground that they are not relevant to a determination of accuracy. Did not Kuhn

(1970) argue for the incommensurability of paradigms, meaning that one cannot be critiqued (or even understood) within the framework of another? (See Phillips, 1992, for a critique of this view.)

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SCIENCE

Based on their published work, many educators either have been seriously misinformed or are uninformed about what science is and is not or have chosen to present inaccurate accounts. Because of this, readers are misinformed and may discard valuable methods of inquiry and rely on methods that cannot yield answers to questions posed. In neither book is there a clear, accurate description of a natural science approach to the development of knowledge. Instead we find misrepresentations of the domain of social work research as "positivistic" and descriptions and critiques of positivism. A heuristic paradigm is contrasted with "scientism" and the virtue of the former lauded (Sherman & Reid, 1994b). Scientism is not science. "Scientism" is a term used "to indicate slavish adherence to the methods of science in the context where they are inappropriate . . . It is sometimes used in a related but somewhat different way to indicate a false or mistaken claim to be scientific" (Phillips, 1987, p. 206).

Although Phillips (1987, 1990, 1992) is referenced in both books, his contributions to clarifying different ways of knowing deserve more careful attention. He provided a clear, accurate account of the role of theory in influencing observation, the relation between theory and evidence, and the role of auxiliary and ad hoc assumptions in postpositivistic science (to distinguish it from positivism). The postpositivism that he described is not his own unique philosophy (as implied by Reid, 1994); it is an approach to gaining knowledge that is widely accepted (guessing and critically testing claims within a problem-solving framework). In *Philosophy, Science and Social Inquiry*, he gave us a clear, readable, accurate view of different ways of knowing. He described Popper's (1972) critical rationalism (a problem-solving approach to science that involves guessing and critically testing claims) (see also Miller, 1994) and reasons for favoring a falsification approach to testing claims over a justification (inductive) approach. His recent book *The Social Scientist's Bestiary* addressed common misconceptions about science. He noted that the theory-laden nature of observation has been accepted in science for some time. He pointed out that postpositivism has accepted the notion of "the social construction of reality" for decades (Phillips, 1990). The fact that a given study selectively ignores certain aspects of the environment is usually not a valid criticism of any kind of research, qualitative or quantitative. One must look at the cumulative results. It is well accepted in science that individual studies often address only part of "the picture."

Those advocating the use of qualitative methods often confuse pseudoscience and science, science and scientism (Bunge, 1984). They rightly object to pseudoscience in quantitative studies but injudiciously reject science along with this and often rely on pseudoscience themselves (for example, suppressing unfavorable data, relying on authority, guessing rather than guessing and testing). Confusion between science and pseudoscience is not surprising given the prevalence of the latter. There is no doubt that the professional literature contains pseudoscience in the guise of science on the part of quantitative researchers that may have generated misguided, misleading, or uninformative views about how to help clients. That does not mean that the scientific process is not useful.

COGNITIVE BIASES

Considerable attention has been devoted to the influence of the heuristics (rules) we use in making judgments and the ways in which they may lead us astray (Dawes, 1988; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Examples include availability (relying on preconceptions, or what's available in memory) and representativeness (relying on similarity).

Availability

The misleading influence of preconceptions on judgments is one of the most robust findings in psychology (for example, Nisbett & Ross, 1980). A point of view may overly restrict the range of material read. Someone who favors qualitative methods may uncritically accept incorrect appraisals of supposedly competing philosophies of knowledge or theories of behavior and so not read related material. There is a behavioral confirmation effect in which we search for and overweigh evidence in favor of a preferred view and overlook and underweigh evidence against it (Baron, 1994). Only if one casts a wide net (by reading widely) to catch different kinds of data collection methods can one get an idea of the potential overlap between qualitative and quantitative methods. Such broad reading is discouraged by hasty assumptions based on preconceptions. This behavioral confirmation tendency, together with our tendency to ignore base-rate data, contributes to a misrepresentation of the social work research domain as overly quantitative.

For example, Riessman (1994b) claims that "we privilege the abstract, statistical aggregate in social work research: average tendencies, not individual lives

in context" (p. ix). She claims that there is "a dominant paradigm in social work research" (Riessman, 1994b, p. vii) and that this is a positivistic approach. Riessman cites reviews by Fraser et al. (1991) and Glisson (1990) of research published in social work journals in support of the view that social work research is identified with quantification. However, the Fraser et al. and Glisson reviews do not support this view. In reviews of research published in five social work journals, Glisson found that the majority of studies (63 percent) used surveys without probability sampling. Only a small percentage involved single case (1.9 percent) or experimental studies (4.6 percent). Fraser and his colleagues reported similar findings in a review of 10 journals between 1985 and 1988. Fewer than half of all articles reviewed were research based, and fewer than 6 percent of these used an experimental design. Most studies relied on percentages and simple counts. Fewer than half of the surveys used multivariate statistical methods. Fraser (1994) concluded that "the core social work literature contains little rigorous research from either a quantitative or qualitative point-of-view" (p. 253). The Riessman and Sherman and Reid books contain a number of studies that rely on surveys and interviews with large numbers of people. Are these not the very kind of research Riessman argues against?

Self-determination may be compromised rather than enhanced by relying on data about "individual lives" when making predictions. "We believe that if we talk to people and get to know them 'as individuals,' we can understand them better than by using broad general principles and seeing how they should be applied" (Dawes, 1994, p. 19). Base-rate data (for example, regarding the recidivism of parolees) may provide the only accurate guidelines. Intuition based on detailed "rich" data about an individual does not necessarily enhance accuracy. Over 140 studies show that actuarial methods are more accurate than "professional judgment" in making many different kinds of predictions (see Dawes, 1988, 1994). Far from reflecting respect for clients, urging helpers to base decisions on intuition leaves clients vulnerable to the effects of incorrect judgments. Respect for clients requires rigorously questioning practice beliefs and actions.

Representativeness

Discussions of qualitative research reveal questionable assumptions based on representativeness, or judgments based on similarity. The assumption that a particular point of view is compatible only with certain kinds of research is a form of representative thinking in which decisions and judgments are made on the basis of similarity, which can be a misleading basis for judgment (Dawes, 1988; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). For example, because a study has numbers does not mean that it ignores "individual voices" (or their variability) or that it is not "humane." The belief that one cannot be both soft-hearted (caring) and hard-headed (skeptical) perpetuates polarized positions and is not true. An example par excellence of the incorrectness of this view can be seen in the contributions of applied behavior analysis in helping a wide variety of individuals enhance the quality of their lives using empirically based intervention methods (for example, Carr et al., 1994; Meyer & Evans, 1989). These efforts have been so successful with some clients (for example, special education students) that they are now mandated in some states (see, for example, *Positive Behavioral Intervention Regulations*, 1993).

You can have rigor without rigor mortis. You can have rigor and relevance. In fact, rigor helps to guard clients' rights by basing claims on systematic documentation of effects rather than on questionable appeals such as consensus and intuition. The history of science and medicine shows that the results of experimental research involving systematic investigation (and using numbers) often free us from false beliefs that harm rather than help and decrease our susceptibility to fraudulent claims.

Are Numbers Taboo?

There seems to be a great waffling on the place of numbers in discourse on qualitative research. Although qualitative studies usually do not involve experimental manipulation, they often do involve counting. On the one hand, we find entire chapters devoted to a description of the use of computer programs to analyze qualitative data (Richards & Richards, 1994) and detailed guidelines on how to identify themes. On the other hand, we find negative comments about reliance on quantitative methods and are not provided quantitative information that must be available to identify and check themes, as emphasized in the literature on qualitative methods. According to Sherman and Reid (1994a), "Deciding what to count as a unit of analysis is essentially a qualitative and interpretive issue that requires judgment and choice in the development of themes, categories, classifications, and typologies from data collected in naturalistic situations, rather than from the experimental or otherwise controlled conditions common to quantitative procedures" (p. 1). Doesn't making this decision also involve counting? Use of grounded theory includes noting the frequency with which themes are mentioned. Development of themes, categories, and classifications involves counting (that

is, attending to how often certain kinds of content appear). The clearer the description of a theme, the less need there is for interpretation.

Is it OK to count as long as one does not tell the result (for example, the percentage of time a given theme was identified)? Are numbers taboo? Given the large samples involved in many of the studies described in these two books, it would be possible to complement the data presented with frequency counts and percentages and to assess the reliability of the coding. In fact, some tables (and even one graph) are included in these books. Missing from them both is any mention of the scores of observational studies conducted in real-life settings (for example, of interactions between children and parents and between residents and staff) carried out by applied behavior analysts. Is this because applied behavior analysts use numbers to report their data and collect reliability data to determine if observers agree on their observations? Perhaps in no other area than applied behavior analysis are there more detailed descriptions based on observation in real-life settings (see, for example, the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*). Underplaying the use of numbers in reports of qualitative inquiry may be a result of an either–or framing that obscures overlaps between qualitative and quantitative methods. Or it may occur to lend a distinction to qualitative (compared to quantitative) methods they do not have (at least in this sense).

MARKETING IN PLACE OF SCHOLARSHIP

Some of the discourse concerning different data collection methods deviates so sharply from scholarly standards that we must ask why this is so (for example, the misrepresentation of science). Scholar–educators should be "virtuoso students" (Rieff, 1973). They should do the hard work required to accurately present different perspectives and well-reasoned arguments for favored and opposing positions. We do not find such arguments in these books. Instead, we often find claims asserted with no accompanying argument.

A marketing approach to "knowledge" may account for the dysfunctional polarization of quantitative and qualitative methods as well as the lapse in scholarship in some of the writings on different data collection methods. Those who market ideas attempt to put forward a certain view, not through a balanced and accurate presentation of related points of view, but through reliance on propaganda strategies such as vague emotional language (for example, "rich," "thick," "mechanistic"), distorted presentations of disliked positions, and presentation only of data that support a favored position and question begging. These stratagems are common in discussions of qualitative methods (and no doubt examples could also be found in discussions of quantitative methods). Consider the following: "There was a recognition that the controlled and reductive procedures of quantitative research tended to selectively ignore much of the context of any study and thereby miss significant factors in the situation that more holistic qualitative observation and description might identify" (Sherman & Reid, 1994a, p. 3). What evidence is there that important things were missed? Missed in relation to what purpose? What is meant by "reductive" and "holistic"? If past efforts were so misguided, how do we account for knowledge that has accumulated about behavior and how to change it?

Claims made often appeal to relevance, which is but one criterion on which arguments should be assessed. Others include acceptability, sufficiency, and effective rebuttal (Damer, 1994). Critiques of favored positions are absent. There is often a kind of magical thinking, a belief that saying so makes it so. Asserting that a certain method yields information about causes does not make it so.

GOALS AND CONTINGENCIES THAT COMPETE WITH SOUND SCHOLARSHIP

We cannot assume that the goal of all researchers or academics is pursuit of the most accurate view of what is under consideration. Other goals may compete with this interest, such as the search for fame, fortune, and tenure (Sperber, 1990). Flew (1985) might argue that insincerity may be a problem (for example, when one claims to care about the effects of service programs but does not evaluate outcome in a way that yields accurate data about outcome). Some seem to have as a goal to "trash" a disliked view rather than to clarify through reasoned scholarship.

Scholarship takes time. Finding out what is known and not known in an area and taking the time to understand the perspectives discussed, especially when these differ from favored views, are time consuming. Saving time is probably one reason for the prevalence of incorrect views of nonpreferred positions in the social work literature. The expectations of "original" contributions fuel an ahistorical approach and encourage the use of the trappings of science unaccompanied by the substance. Miller and Hersen (1992) suggested that the emphasis on acquiring grants, especially over the past years, has helped create an anti-intellectual environment in which people focus on how much money they get rather than on what they are doing with it.

Often, different data collection methods seem to be selected just because they are more personally ap-

pealing or entertaining to use, not because they will be more successful in shedding light on a question. There seems to be a confusion between personal preferences and what a method offers. An example would be offering three in-depth case examples to support a claim that a certain intervention method is effective. Anecdotes and illustrations are not persuasive evidence. Client concerns often seem to be lost in concerns about what researchers like or want to do. Consider the following: "As a practitioner I find the heuristic paradigm interesting because it allows for the complexity and richness that are characteristic of practice and because it makes use of practitioner judgment and expertise" (Dean, 1994, p. 282). Where is the client in all of this?

Information that decreases uncertainty about how to help clients attain outcomes they value is of unique concern in professions like social work. This kind of knowledge aids in enhancing the personal welfare of clients and avoiding harm, two cardinal aims of ethical practice. There seems to be a lack of interest in seeking knowledge that is helpful in preventing and relieving client complaints and in showing that it is helpful. Why should clients take anyone's word that *x* works? Is "listening to voices" accompanied by achieving outcomes clients value? Are outcomes attained that enhance the quality of life for clients? Rather than insisting that certain methods are sufficient to the task (when they are not), researchers should select methods that provide a rigorous test of assumptions. We have to decide whether helping clients is our main goal. If it is, the focus should be on finding out what is helpful in preventing and resolving complaints and inequities.

Different goals reflect different definitions of understanding and explanation. Some people may say they understand an event if an explanation of interpretation "makes sense to them." Empathic explanations are accepted on the basis of whether they make psychological sense to people, whether they, too, would have acted in the same manner, for example. These kinds of explanations can be distinguished from scientific ones by their ready acceptance of untested premises and reliance on ethical judgments: "Ideological explanations become operative as they are believed, rather than as they are verified" (Nettler, 1970, p. 179). A goal of bolstering favored views, rather than discovering the closest approximation to the truth, encourages acceptance of ideological explanations.

CONCLUSION

Our only bone to pick should be the bone of getting the most information about a question with a given amount of time, money, and effort. Qualitative research and quantitative research are friends in a quest for knowledge, as emphasized by many authors (for example, Reichardt & Cook, 1979; Reid, 1994) and as suggested by the many interesting reports in the Riessman and Sherman and Reid books. They represent a menu of data collection methods from which we can judiciously draw depending on our purpose.

The purpose of academic discourse is to accurately present different points of view and to fearlessly assess claims in terms of their accuracy. Professions such as social work have the arduous task of drawing on the knowledge of many different disciplines and professions to try to decrease uncertainty about how to help clients attain valued outcomes. This requires translation skills to understand the "logic" of different points of view and to translate them into the "logic of social work" without distorting them. The hard work required to accomplish accurate translation and well-reasoned critical review too often remains undone.

I recommend less either–oring and marketing strategies, more scholarship to persuade through reasoned judgments and sound evidence, and more matching of purpose and method. Accurately describing data collection methods will highlight the ways in which different methods complement each other and enrich opportunities to make optimal choices. Misrepresentations result in menus that are incomplete, that contain options that will not provide helpful data, or that provide misleading data. Wise selection will usually not be an either–or matter, but a matter of choosing methods that provide the most accurate account of what is under investigation. Critical thinking values, knowledge, and skills will be useful in deciding among data collection methods and different ways of discussing what is best (Brookfield, 1987; Gambrill, 1990; Gibbs, 1991). The intellectual virtues described by Paul (1993) provide helpful guidelines (for example, intellectual empathy that emphasizes our responsibility to accurately describe different viewpoints).

All researchers, quantitative as well as qualitative, should provide support for claims made that is acceptable, relevant, and sufficient to the nature of the claim, and they should offer well-reasoned arguments that their claims are better than alternative views (Damer, 1994). The emphasis on different ways of knowing often seems to mean that different ways of knowing are equally accurate. Although this may be true for many kinds of questions, it is not true of all. The past can be used as a guide for how to do better in the future. We have new opportunities to value scholarship over marketing and to focus on knowledge development that helps clients attain outcomes they value. ■

REFERENCES

Asimov, J. (1989). The relativity of wrong. *Skeptical Inquirer, 14,* 35–44.

Atkinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 248–261). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Baron, J. (1994). *Thinking and deciding* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Brookfield, S. D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers: Challenging adults to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bunge, M. (1984). What is pseudoscience? *Skeptical Inquirer, 9,* 36–47.

Burnette, D. (1994). Managing chronic illness alone in late life: Sisyphus at work. In C. K. Riessman (Ed.), *Qualitative studies in social work research* (pp. 5–27). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Carr, E. G., Levin, L., McConnachie, G., Carlson, J. I., Kemp, D. C., & Smith, C. E. (1994). *Communication-based intervention for problem behavior: A user's guide for producing positive change.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Damer, E. T. (1995). *Attacking faulty reasoning: A practice guide to fallacy-free arguments.* Pacific Grove, CA: Wadsworth.

Dawes, R. M. (1988). *Rational choice in an uncertain world.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Dawes, R. M. (1994). *House of cards: Psychology and psychotherapy built on myth.* New York: Free Press.

Dean, R. G. (1994). Commentary: A practitioner's perspective on qualitative case evaluation methods. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 279–284). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Flew, A. (1985). *Thinking about social thinking: The philosophy of the social sciences.* Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.

Fraser, M. W. (1994). Scholarship and research in social work: Emerging challenges. *Journal of Social Work Education, 30,* 252–266.

Fraser, M. W., Taylor, M. J., Jackson, R., & O'Jack, J. (1991). Social work and science: Many ways of knowing? *Social Work Research & Abstracts, 27*(4), 5–15.

Gambrill, E. D. (1990). *Critical thinking in clinical practice: Improving the accuracy of judgments and decisions about clients.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gibbs, L. E. (1991). *Scientific reasoning for social workers.* New York: Macmillan.

Glisson, C. (1990). *A systematic assessment of the social work literature: Trends in social work research.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee, College of Social Work.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Loftus, E. F. (1982). Memory and its distortions. In A. G. Kraut (Ed.), *G. Stanley Hall lectures* (pp. 119–154). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Loftus, E. F. (1993). The reality of repressed memories. *American Psychologist, 48,* 518–537.

Maluccio, A. N., & Fein, E. (1994). Tidiness in an untidy world: Research in child welfare. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 337–346). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Meyer, L. H., & Evans, I. M. (1989). *Nonaversive intervention for behavior problems: A manual for home and community.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Miller, D. (1994). *Critical rationalism: A restatement and defense.* Chicago: Open Court.

Miller, D. J., & Hersen, M. (Eds.). (1992). *Research fraud in the behavioral and biomedical sciences.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Nettler, G. (1970). *Explanations.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Nisbett, R., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgement.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Paul, R. (1993). *Critical thinking: What every person needs to survive in a rapidly changing world.* Rohnert Park, CA: Sonoma State University, Foundation for Critical Thinking.

Phillips, D. C. (1987). *Philosophy, science and social inquiry.* New York: Pergamon Press.

Phillips, D. C. (1990). Subjectivity and objectivity: An objective inquiry. In E. W. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp. 19–37). New York: Columbia University Press.

Phillips, D. C. (1992). *The social scientists' bestiary: A guide to fabled threats to, and defenses of, naturalistic social science.* New York: Pergamon Press.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1991). Qualitative procedures for counseling research. In C. E. Watkins, Jr., & L. J. Schneider (Eds.), *Research in counseling* (pp. 163–204). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Popper, K. R. (1972). *Conjectures and refutations: The growth of scientific knowledge* (rev. ed.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Positive Behavioral Intervention Regulations. (1993). (Available from California Department of Education, 721 Capital Mall, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244–2720.)

Reichardt, C. S., & Cook, T. D. (1979). Beyond qualitative versus quantitative methods. In T. D. Cook & C. S. Reichardt (Eds.), *Qualitative and quantitative methods in evaluation research* (pp. 7–32). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Reid, W. J. (1994). Reframing the epistemological debate. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 464–481). New York: Columbia University Press.

Richards, T. J., & Richards, L. (1994). Using computers in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 445–462). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rieff, P. (1973). *Fellow teachers.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Riessman, C. K. (1994a). Making sense of marital violence: One woman's narrative. In C. K. Riessman (Ed.), *Qualitative studies in social work research* (pp. 113–132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Riessman, C. K. (1994b). Preface: Making room for diversity in social work research. In C. K. Riessman (Ed.), *Qualitative studies in social work research* (pp. vii–xx). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Riessman, C. K. (Ed.). (1994c). *Qualitative studies in social work research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rodwell, M. K., & Woody, D. III. (1994). Constructivist evaluation: The policy/practice context. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 315–327). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sands, R. G., & McClelland, M. (1994). Emic and etic perspectives in ethnographic research on the interdisciplinary team. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 32–41). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sherman, E., & Reid, W. J. (1994a). Introduction: Coming of age in social work—The emergence of qualitative research. In E. Sherman & W. J. Reid (Eds.), *Qualitative research in social work* (pp. 1–15). New York: Columbia University Press.

Sherman, E., & Reid, W. J. (Eds.). (1994b). *Qualitative research in social work.* New York: Columbia University Press.
Sperber, I. (1990). *Fashions in science: Opinion leaders and collective behavior sciences.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of women.* New York: Free Press.

Accepted December 15, 1994