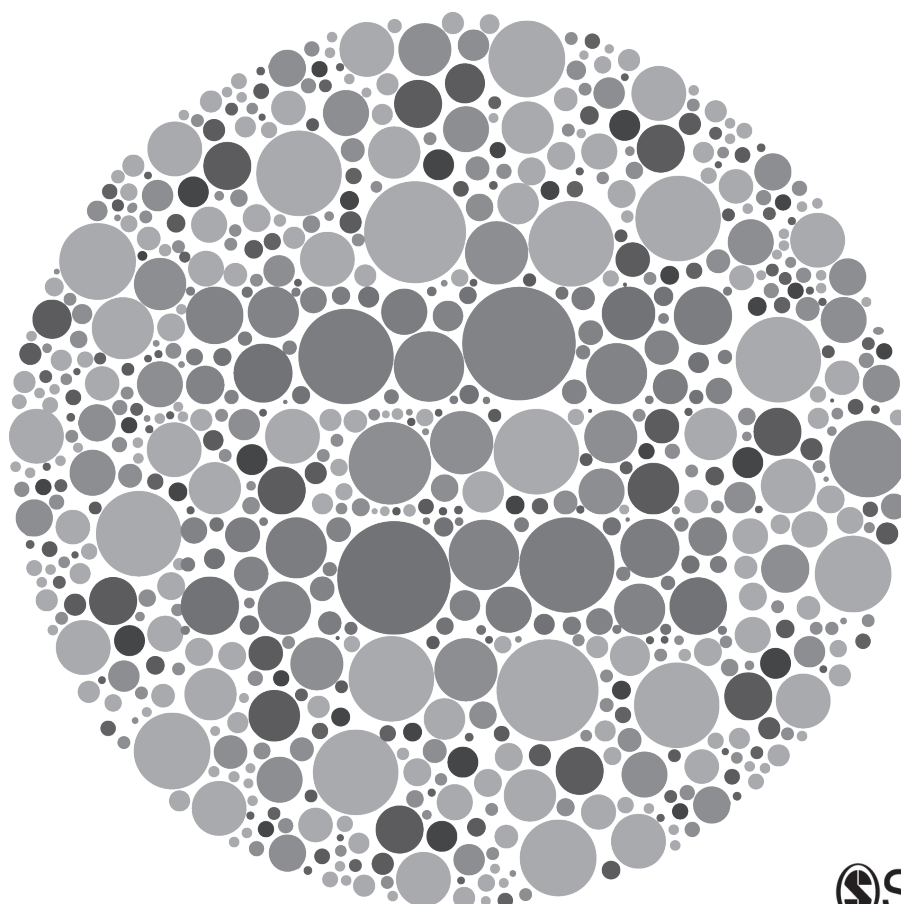


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RESEARCHING RACISM

A GUIDE BOOK *for* ACADEMICS & PROFESSIONAL INVESTIGATORS



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RACE, RACISM AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

Keywords: *qualitative methods, everyday language, ethnography, qualitative analysis, research ethics, dissemination of findings*

Introduction

Up to now we have presented overviews of the historical context of race and racism (Chapter 1), definitional and conceptual issues (Chapter 2) and legal frameworks (Chapter 3), before discussing the relevance to and problem of race and racism in and as part of contemporary society (Chapter 4). In the light of our discussion so far, we have pointed to the general ontological and epistemological standpoint which we feel is necessary to conduct research into race and racism. In this chapter we want to look more specifically at some of the qualitative research methods that you might use in conducting your research – as we termed it in the previous chapter, excavating the landscape of race and racism in contemporary everyday life.

This chapter is not an ‘introduction to social research’ *per se* then, which would be well beyond the scope of the chapter (or the book as a whole), but more of an exploration of some key issues that you are most likely to come across as part of your research.¹ The aim here is to furnish you with some methodological and procedural knowledge that will allow you to explore some of the issues dealt with in previous chapters, and are ones which we shall, in part, illustrate through our use of case studies in Chapter 6.

The questions raised in this chapter are:

- What are some of the ‘key methods’ used to collect qualitative data?
- How might ‘ethnographically sensitive’ work yield insights into race and racism in contemporary sites, settings and contexts?
- What are some of the ‘key issues’ to consider when conducting ethnographic work?
- How might spoken language reveal race and racism in contemporary society?

- How do qualitative researchers approach the analysis of qualitative data?
- What factors might have to be taken into consideration when deciding to disseminate the results of qualitative research into race and racism?

Documentary Records, Images and Artefacts

As we suggested in the previous chapter, the social world is a recorded, documented and mediated place. The issue of race can be the focus of such documentary activities and enterprises. Moreover, documents – often at an institutional level – come to be read routinely as accurate records and depictions of social reality – as ‘fact’. As powerful definitional resources, they can be, and often are, not only meaningful, but *consequential*.

The term documents, at least as we are using it here, is something of a catch-all for a range of materials, from very *official* records to very *personal* items, from the strictly *private* to the openly *public*, from the easily *accessible* to the strictly *off limits*. The vernacular understanding of document points to written materials. Indeed, these will likely be the kind of documents you come across more than anything else in your research. However, the term can be extended to include any ‘item’ or ‘artefact’ that in some way forms part of the lifeworld of those persons or groups you are researching and specifically, indexes notions of processes of racialisation, and practices of racism.

Official Sources

What might be referred to as ‘official’ and institutional documentation can provide useful data in race and racism research. This may include contemporary documentation, or could include more historical documents; the latter can reveal some of the issues covered in Chapter 1, the former more contemporary forms of race and racism outlined in the previous chapter. Starting institutionally ‘at the top’, so to speak, governmental and even international legislation (see Chapter 3) can reveal how race is conceptualised and defined and point to the potential problems (problems for – e.g. underpinning anti-racist policy – or caused by – e.g. driving immigration policy – various racial and ethnic groups) that such legislation recognises and seeks to formally address. State documents such as official reports may also yield similar data (see Macpherson, 1999; Ministry of Justice, 2013a). We examined closely legislation pertaining to racist and discriminatory behaviour in Chapter 3. Legal documents (e.g. court proceedings or outcomes of inquiries) are another source of data. Indeed, legislative documentation reveals a very clear crystallisation of prevailing (governmental, legal) understandings of race and racism at any point in time (see e.g. the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006). ‘Institutional’ documentation such as official records or files kept about persons

or groups of persons may also be a useful source of data (see Chapter 6). The ideas contained within and processes underlying these documents may filter down and be institutionally translated into organisational documentation, such as written company policy on matters such as equality and diversity in the treatment and recruitment of members of racial and ethnic minorities. Ideas contained within these may even be formulated for public consumption in the form of mission statements and the like. At a practical level, documentation may be given a pedagogical slant in the form of staff guidance, training courses, or a punitive one in the form of disciplinary procedures. Whenever and wherever race ‘appears’ in such documentation – in those documentary contexts – it will reveal how the notion has not only been conceptualised, but practically employed, and of course, the nature and extent of any discriminatory ways in which the concept has been used (for example, in the UK, every local authority produces guidelines on how to tackle racist incidents in schools and they are compelled to do so by virtue of the Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000).

As we shall see below, ‘accessibility’ is an inherent issue in all research, and not all of this type of documentary material will be immediately accessible to you. Indeed, much like the focus for investigative journalists and the like, an added dimension to accessibility of documentary material is the possible distinction between the ‘public’ face of anti-racism practices and the ‘private’ reality (a front-stage/back-stage distinction that is endemic to contemporary western society [see Goffman, 1959]). Indeed, some ‘internal’ documents, such as minutes of meetings or e-mails can reveal interesting data for race and racism researchers (and if ‘leaked’ can be the cause of some embarrassment, as evidenced in the furore caused by the 2010 ‘Wikileaks’ incident).

Of course, there may be quite overt racially oriented political dimensions to the documentary evidence you collect, that is, documents may be used to explicitly and quite openly represent and convey meaning, or ‘send a message’ about race (see Ministry of Justice, 2013b). This can include mainstream politics, such as political manifestos and other literature, transcripts of political speeches or even imagery used for political purposes, but can also include more subversive and discriminatory notions of race and ethnicity. The text used in the period of the Third Reich in Nazi Germany is a clear example of this (Herf, 2006). However, more contemporary examples include literature produced by right-wing groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) and the British National Party (BNP) in the UK as well as other extremist and radicalised groups (see e.g. Blee, 2000; Fielding, 1982). Falling into this broad category of written racialisation might also be lay politicisation of racially charged messages, manifest in such things as graffiti (see Chapter 6, Case Study 3).

Media and Images

We have already pointed to the role the news media play in racialisation (see Chapters 1 and 4). ‘Institutional’ and often ‘politicised’, rather formal and quite specialised documents

are perhaps less interesting than what might be termed cultural documentation. These are important because they not only contain notions of race, and display contemporary racism but, more importantly, are designed for public consumption, and are, inevitably, consumed, often quite willingly, unthinkingly and uncritically. Obvious cultural documents that might contain notions of race and have some hand in processes of racialisation are newspapers, in particular the tabloid press. They are to some extent the ‘pulse of perceived reality’ for many at any moment in time and can quite often be seen to be openly and proactively engaged in racialisation (Hall, 2000; van Dijk, 1991). The popular press and news media fuel popular discourse and populist notions of race and, as was shown in Stanley Cohen’s (2011) classic text *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, seek out persons belonging to groups that pose a threat to the moral and social order. For example, since the atrocities of 9/11 and 7/7 in the UK, fears surrounding young, disaffected Muslim males and processes of radicalisation have been fed into the news media on a regular basis, presenting notions of the Muslim ‘folk devil’ (Patel and Tyrer, 2011; Quraishi, 2005, 2013; Webster, 1997b; see Chapter 6, Case Study 2). More recently in the UK, the notion of ‘Asian grooming’ of minors has ‘hit the headlines’, leading to public and political sensitisation and resultant discourses (Moore et al., 2008; Sian et al., 2012). Of course, there is also a connection between the media and the political realm, with popular discourse sometimes driving political decision making.

However, the more insidious and invisible racism is, the more dangerous it can be. Indeed, racialisation and the notions that underpin these processes can reach the point of entertaining and even amusing us (Weaver, 2011). A myriad of forms of popular culture may evidence this. This type of documentary material should be readily and easily accessible to you. You might draw on televised popular culture for example. In the UK, the 1970s were marked by notably politically incorrect forms of televised sitcoms such as *Rising Damp* and *Love thy Neighbour*, and before this programmes such as *The Black and White Minstrel Show*, which were often explicitly racist but extremely popular, as were a host of then popular comedians who regularly appeared on prime time television (Bourne, 2005). Those days are now behind us, but popular and simplified notions of race still exist in popular culture. Cinematic film also routinely engages in – indeed has a long history of – racialisation. For example the historic practice of ‘blackening up’ whereby white Hollywood actors would darken their skin to play black characters (Stam and Spence, 1983); to the more recent stereotypical depictions of the Muslim as terrorist (Mandel, 2001; see also Cripps, 1977; Silk and Silk, 1990). The music industry is also often highly racialised, and this spills over into fashion and sub-cultural styles (see e.g. Back, 2000).

Finally, a range of new communications and media mentioned in Chapter 3, such as social networking, social media and blogs, have changed the landscape, meaning and uses of media in contemporary society.

Personal Documents

One thing we emphasised in the previous chapter was the personal aspect of race and racism (including how they are immediately and locally experienced). Indeed, this is

when race and racism are most acutely ‘felt’ as such. Such immediate and personal experience is often recorded and reflected in a range of personal documents. These can include such things as diaries, letters, photographs or other private documents (see Thomas and Znaniecki [1918] for a pioneering use of these types of documents in their study of immigrant populations). These can give an insight into experiences of race and racism from a very personal perspective and over a long period of time. Such materials can be used to good effect when conducting case studies or using what is referred to as a biographical or life history method (see Shaw [1966] for another classic example of this method). ‘Personal’ documents might also include official records and files kept not by particular individuals, but about them (see Chapter 6, Case Study 2).

One issue that should not be overlooked when considering how race is ‘documented’ at a personal level is the fact that race is an ‘embodied’ phenomenon, that is, arises out of bodily attributes (skin colour, eye shape, hair type, etc; see Goffman, 1963) often leading to what we shall discuss in Chapter 6 as ‘at first sight’ categorisation or ‘immigrant imagery’. Moreover, the body can be actively and deliberately marked, modified or masked as having particular (or not having) racial qualities (Gilman, 2010). To that extent the body itself can serve as a document of race and racism, marked, for example, in tattoos,² scars, signs of assault (see Chapter 6, Case Study 2) or punishment or blemishes, alterations or modifications³ of the skin or body (either imposed or made out of choice).

Approaching notions of race and ethnicity and processes of racialisation as lived and experienced, as evidenced in and through documentary items, will bring you close to the human aspect of race and racism. However, as we alluded to in the preceding chapter, we advocate a greater degree of exposure to these experiences and the interpretations, meanings and actions that inform and are informed by them. This movement from documentary to experiential lies at the heart of qualitative research and requires a particular set of issues to be appreciated, practicalities to overcome, and methods to be employed.

Utterances, Language and Meaning

In the previous chapter we gave some emphasis to the role language plays in everyday life. Citing Schutz, we referred to this as the typifying medium *par excellence*. We also noted the use of language in the context of documentary materials. Much of what we have talked about so far can be reflected in the way persons or groups are prepared to talk about their experiences, the meanings they attribute to things and the way they interpret them, and their motivations and intentions, actions and behaviours. When we consider the spoken or ‘uttered’ word a huge array of possibilities for studying race and racism in a contemporary and everyday context opens up for us. Again, ultimately this involves engagement with – and exposure to – those whom you wish to study.

Qualitative Interviews

As we emphasised in Chapter 4, central to research into race and racism should be the exploration of the relationship between race, subjectivity and ‘lived experience’ (Gunaratnam, 2003). As a researcher, you will need to in some way access these experiences. A prime method for doing this is the qualitative interview (see Spradley, 1979). Actually, referring to the qualitative interview is something of a misnomer as, unlike questionnaires or surveys, no two interviews in qualitative research are ever the same, so we can’t speak of *the* interview. However, their ubiquitous use as a key part of qualitative research attests to their power in accessing the experiences, attitudes, beliefs and potentially revealing prejudices of people in any social group.

Interviews are usually conducted on a face-to-face, one-to-one basis (although they can be conducted over the telephone, or, nowadays, even online). They tend to be semi-structured, or even unstructured, in nature (especially in ethnographic encounters – see below), with the former usually involving some loose interview schedule and the latter some sort of *aide memoire* (see the Appendix for an example from our own research). Qualitative interviews should allow as much as possible to emerge from the informants’ own articulation of experience and allow the subject to relay experience via accounts of lived events as part of his/her everyday life. Essed (1991) is worth quoting at length here:

Experiences are a suitable source of information for the study of everyday racism because they include personal experiences as well as vicarious experiences of racism. In addition the notion of experience includes general knowledge of racism, which is an important source of information to qualify whether specific events can be generalized. These experiences of racism are made available for academic inquiry through accounts – that is, verbal reconstructions of experiences ... reconstructions of experiences in such accounts provide the best basis for the analysis of the simultaneous impact of racism in different sites and in different social relations. Accounts of racism locate the narrators as well as their experiences in the social contexts of their everyday lives, give specificity and detail to events, and invite the narrator to carefully qualify subtle experiences of racism. (Essed, 1991: 3–4)

You should remember that you are in effect asking a lot of any person who agrees to be interviewed, as you may find yourself *exploring* – and your informant *exposing* – not only private experiences, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, but also quite personal aspects of biography and life history (see Kvale, 1996). Because of this, you need to ensure that your informants (and you) are comfortable in such encounters as there may be a range of issues that make such encounters difficult or even impossible. The qualitative interview is not an ‘interrogation’ and you will need to build up a *rapport* with your informant as well as gain their trust (Glesnec and Peshkin, 1992; Mann and Stewart, 2000). Indeed, informants can often subjugate themselves if they feel in any way under pressure to ‘perform’. Ironically, one disadvantage of gaining too much trust

and establishing too much rapport is that informants can often 'spill out' and divulge extremely personal matters, sometimes of no (immediate) relevance to your research focus. Of course, the opposite may be the case, and your informants may 'clam up'. This can happen in any research project, but, in the context of the current discussion, as we noted in the previous chapter, issues of race and racism, and *in situ processes of racialisation and ethnicisation* may have an impact on either of these possibilities (Egharevba, 2001). However, we have argued at various points in this text that the social world is socially constructed and we have found that informants usually work with interviewers to co-construct a *recognisably successful interview* (although, of course, this will not always be the case as some informants will work to construct an unnecessarily awkward one!).

Although you should respect the words of your informants, it is always good to be aware that their comments will be subjectively charged (indeed, this is why you are accessing them). Furthermore, you are never guaranteed that your informants will allow you access to their experiences or true beliefs, attitudes or behaviours through the interview encounter, especially in respect of things you are unable to observe directly. Thus, although an important tool for the qualitative researcher, qualitative interviews also run the risk of providing a one-dimensional and sometimes uncorroborated set of data.

We shall talk a little more about research settings below, but one consideration you will need to take into account is the difference between what are commonly referred to as non-naturalistic and naturalistic settings. We are using the terms here to refer to those physical settings that are alien to those whom you are studying in the case of the former, and those settings that form part of everyday life for those persons or groups in the case of the latter. Non-naturalistic settings will be unfamiliar to the interviewee but more controllable, the latter (which we shall discuss shortly) will be familiar to the interviewee but less controllable (indeed, the researcher should avoid interference with such settings as much as possible [see Lincoln and Guba, 1985]).

Qualitative interviews can yield bountiful data on personal beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, experience and biography and provide insight into the social reality you are investigating. Indeed, they often provide access to what would otherwise be inaccessible (or unobservable), for example other places, times, periods or events that form part of your informants' personal experience or life history. Most importantly, they give your informants the possibility to articulate these issues *in their own words*, and on their own terms.

Focus Groups

An extension of the individual interview is the group interview (oddly, the paired interview seems to be seldom used in qualitative research). However, group data gathering would commonly take the form of focus groups (see Hughes and Dumont, 2002).

Naturally Occurring Language

The notion of persons conveying the everyday in *their own words* is perhaps no more clearly demonstrated than when one considers naturally occurring talk. That is, talk as *part of* the mundane, routine activity of day-to-day life. Such talk can reveal the way persons describe, typify and account for their experiences of race and racism (see Chapter 4). The field of conversation analysis (see Sacks, 1992) draws its empirical basis from the recording and analysis of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction (see our discussion at the end of the previous chapter). Naturally occurring conversation can reveal the social construction of race and racism at a very mundane, taken-for-granted level, in and through the primary mode of communication – and social construction – that is, ordinary language. A nice example of how naturally occurring talk can reveal race and racism is in the way what conversation analysts call ‘membership categories’ (see Hester and Eglin, 1997) are used. These are ways in which persons ‘select’ particular ways to describe particular persons or groups. There are myriad ways of describing any person or persons. However, some terms that are used are clearly associated with the construction of race and various forms of racism (see below).

Observations, Fieldwork and Ethnographic Encounters

The emphasis on lived experience and everyday interaction that we feel underpins the social construction of race, processes of racialisation and practices of racism often calls for a more direct engagement with, exposure to and contact with the lifeworld (see Schutz, 1973) of the persons you wish to study. Again, drawing on the notion of the broad distinction between naturalistic and non-naturalistic settings, the former refer to those places (physical, social, cultural) and times that the persons you are interested in researching inhabit as part and parcel of their normal everyday activity; the latter refer to any other setting (usually, one that has been set up or contrived for the purposes of the research); in the former you enter the lifeworld of the persons you are studying; in the latter they tend to enter whatever lifeworld you have constructed for the purposes of the research.

The closer you move towards being an actual participant in the settings and contexts you are interested in, and the greater the extent of exposure to those settings and contexts, the more you move towards conducting what is referred to as ethnographic work. The term ethnography or ethnographic study refers to research which is conducted in naturalistic settings and involves the researcher exposing him/herself to the *day-to-day* experiences and contingencies of those he/she is studying (the data collection aspect of this is generally referred to as ‘fieldwork’). The etymology of the word

literally means ‘writing culture’, the underlying premise that we cannot understand the social world by studying artificial simulations of it in such things as experiments (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 9).

Contemporary ethnographic work has a long history, beginning with the Chicago School of Sociology (see Bulmer, 1984). Researchers working in Chicago at that time viewed the city as a natural laboratory (Park and Burgess, 1925), and were very much interested in community organisation within the burgeoning (and new) urban environment and the relationship between urban geography and social problems (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of some of these issues with specific reference to contemporary British society). They were also interested very much in the experiences of ethnic and racial groups who had migrated to the city (see e.g. Drake and Cayton, 1945; Frazier, 1932; Park, 2004 [1950]; Thompson, 1939).

The popularity of ethnographic methods increased over the twentieth century, based on the recognition that, as we saw in the previous chapter:

... any group of persons – prisoners, primitives, pilots or patients – develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it, and a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject. (Goffman, 1961: 7)⁴

Following a period of relatively little work focusing directly on racism (Twine, 2000), in the past two decades both research into and teaching of issues pertaining to race and racism have been on the increase (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004). Indeed, there are some classic and contemporary studies of race and racism that provide fine illustrations of ethnography in action (Brown, 2001; Carlile, 2012; Cole, 2005; DuBois, 1996 [1899]; Luhrmann, 1996).

Many ethnographic studies involve extended time spent in the ‘field’. However, even limited use of the ethnographic method (using ethnographic methods but with limited exposure and for a limited duration of time compared to full blown ethnographic studies) can provide valuable data and enhance your research experience.

Social Worlds, Social Settings and Research Sites

There are many different types of sites, settings and social worlds (see Chapter 4) in which researchers have explored race and racism, from normally closed off worlds (e.g. inside the police or criminal justice system [Cheliotis and Liebling, 2006; Genders and Player, 1989] – see Case Study 1 in the following chapter) to public streets (see Duneier, 1999; Liebow, 1967). Your choice of setting will be guided by the particular ‘problem’ (see Chapter 4) with which you are approaching your research. You may, for example, be interested in general areas of social activity – general social worlds – such as education, criminal justice, religion, leisure, science, politics, law, the workplace or

everyday life. Such activities tend to be organised in particular places, at particular times, so designed for the social construction of these realms of activity. Thus, classrooms or lecture halls, police stations and prison cells, churches, mosques, synagogues and temples, laboratories, a range of workplaces, and various spaces in the public realm, such as town and city centres, shopping centres or those designed for specific leisure and sporting activities such as pubs, clubs and sporting arenas may be the focus of your activities (see e.g. Cashmore, 2001; Farrington et al., 2012; Jay, 2009; Meeks, 2010). For example, in one of our case studies discussed in the following chapter, the notions of place and time (in this case public houses at weekends) constituted very salient sites for racialisation processes, and ultimately overt acts of racism. The importance of such places will tend to become evident as the lifeworld of those you are studying unfolds during the process of data collection and analysis and new directions for your focus emerge.

Access

Whenever students interested in conducting qualitative, ethnographically sensitive work ask us, as tutors, ‘what shall I research for my dissertation?’ our first answer is often ‘whatever you have access to’. This may sound flippant, but it is a valid recommendation. For you as a qualitative researcher of race and racism, access to naturalistic settings may become an issue in itself. There may be legal reasons why certain settings are not open to you or off limits, it may simply be a matter of convenience or practicality, or, as we suggested in the previous chapter, the question of access may be influenced by your own biographical features which may well include your race. It may be that your race helps you gain access (or you assume it will) or works against you (again, see our own example of this in Chapter 6). For example, if you are a member of a visible ethnic minority and you wish to evaluate attitudes of a majority white institution, your race may prevent respondents from ‘speaking openly’ about their views. Of course, the same applies if you are white and wish to elicit the views and life experiences of visible minorities. Remember also that you must maintain access. Nothing is guaranteed and you may be required – or decide to – withdraw from the field at any time. Whatever the specific circumstances of your research, access may well be something that requires negotiation, compromise, and sometimes, luck.

Getting to the Right People

The beginning of your research will necessarily involve the identification of some ‘population’ you want to focus on. This may seem straightforward, but one issue that immediately crops up is how ‘membership’ of such a population is defined – or rather, socially and culturally constructed, and by whom. Indeed, as should by now be quite apparent, the use of any ‘racial’ category itself is grounded in racialisation, whoever

does this (authorities, members themselves, you as a researcher ‘for the purposes of the research’). You will then need to recruit persons belonging to your chosen population. There are several techniques for sampling persons at the start of qualitative research. You might, for example, use posters or leaflets to recruit participants (see Chapter 6), and this may involve a range of particular sites and settings, particular to the racial group you are interested in (see our discussion of sampling in mosques in Chapter 6). Again, this may rely on racialisation *of* or *by* members of those populations. For example, by responding to calls to participate in your study, members of racial groups will be involved in processes of self-racialisation (Murji and Solomos, 2005). Even more problematic may be relying on others to select, recommend or choose persons for you (and this type of ‘snowball’ sampling does often occur in qualitative research, particularly in what are generally classed as ‘hard to reach’ populations).

Although a necessary part of your research, sampling and selection of persons may gloss over important distinctions between individuals or groups, and potentially places and times. Alternatively, attempting to recognise increasingly nuanced differences between groups or persons may result in an ever increasing (and unmanageable) number of categories or classes of persons which you need to include in your sample.

Finally, in qualitative research, although you may begin with a person or group of people you want to talk to or observe, you may find yourself ‘sampling-as-you-go’, so to speak. That is, deciding who to speak to or observe – and when and where to carry out these research activities – as the research progresses. Therefore, at the outset of qualitative research your main aim will probably be to get the (snow)ball rolling rather than delineating your full cohort in advance. In this sense, sampling is intimately tied in with (ongoing) data analysis, and to that extent forms one side of a coin which marks the *iterative* character of much qualitative research.

Plurality of Perspectives

As we have suggested in the previous chapter, it is important to remember that in conducting your qualitative research into race and racism (indeed, any qualitative research) you need to access a range of experiences and perspectives on whatever issue – whatever problem – it is you are interested in. For example, in the context of the current focus, this will include not only identifying, recruiting and gathering data from those who have been, for example, marginalised and even discriminated against or victimised, but also those who have or may be leading racialising processes (whether directly or indirectly). Accessing a range of perspectives allows us to understand, for example, not just the outcomes of, but the motivations for racist beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. Indeed, just as racism itself can take a myriad of forms and manifestations, so too can motive for such behaviour (see Chapter 6). From an ontological and epistemological perspective, what this also does is open up the idea of ‘multiple truths’ operating around race and racism. Perspectives should be a plural notion.

Roles and Rapport

Assuming that you are not already a member of the social world you are investigating, you will need a reason for 'being there'. The issue of role very much ties in with covert and overt issues in ethnographic work, that is, whether or not the people you are researching are (fully) aware that, above all else, you are conducting research. However, when conducting fieldwork this is often not a 'black and white' matter. For example (unless you wear a brightly coloured shirt with 'I am a researcher' in bold letters on the front), you may be overt to some members, but covert to others, or overt some of the time but covert at others (see our discussion of ethical issues below). Of course, racial or ethnic features of your person that 'stand out' may give you away as an interloper. Extreme cases might be a white European conducting research in a Black segregationist group, or a Black African/Black Caribbean person in a White supremacist group. Under normal circumstances the maelstrom of everyday life in effect precludes an 'all the people give informed consent all of the time' approach, so be aware of this and actively seek to minimise its impact, rather than seeking to exploit it.

As we noted above, building rapport with those with whom you have direct face-to-face contact is essential in race and racism research (Young, 2004). In ethnographic work this interpersonal feature of research can become all the more important. This may start with negotiating access to the field, with some sort of gatekeeper or key holder (see esp. Duneier, 1999). Once in the field, you may find that you not infrequently need to be 'vouched for' by existing members, and 'kept in'. During your work you will then interact with many persons and will need to get them and yourself 'onside', so to speak. Again, this may be hindered or facilitated by your own or others' racial or ethnic features or prejudices. Even if others find these features insurmountable barriers, you must try your best to build and maintain good relations in the field.

Finally, when your research is concluded you must also consider your exit strategy. Simply leaving research sites may cause a number of problems. For example, members of such sites may feel abused, abandoned or duped in some way. When work is finally published they may feel misrepresented after the fact. At a more general level, groups or communities may experience research fatigue (essentially worn out through being over-researched). You are under some obligation then not to 'spoil' the research field in which you are working. Indeed, some ethnographers continue their relationships with their informant long after the ethnographic work has finished (e.g. in his study of African American street vendors, Duneier [1999] invited his key informant to present college lectures for him).

Encountering, Immersing, Observing

The key benefit of ethnographic work is *participant observation*. Whereas speaking with or listening to people may reveal aspects of experience and forms of behaviour and processes of racialisation that cannot be observed by you, so observation can reveal

features that are not (or cannot be) spoken about. It is in and through observation that, perhaps more than anything else, the taken-for-granted features of the social world can be revealed and examined by you as a researcher. In the context of race and racism this can carry added significance since, as we have argued in Chapter 4, much of this may be part of the routine, day-to-day fabric of whatever social setting you are investigating, and to that extent, *invisible-through-routinisation* to members of that setting (although the effects may be very tangible and observable).

Gold (1958) famously outlined the various stances a researcher could adopt when observing, from complete observer at one extreme, to complete participant (in the lifeworld and activities being observed) at the other. Unless you are adopting the stance of complete (and detached) observer (think of the scientist behind a one-way mirror or observing via a CCTV camera) the term is a bit of a misnomer, as you will tend, at one point or another, to draw on all your senses as you not only see, but hear, feel and even smell or taste things as part of your experience in the field (see Pink, 2009). We feel we must stress that observation in qualitative sociological research is not – and should not be regarded as – observation *of*, but rather observation *in* social settings and contexts. Moreover, your observation should be not of particular persons in a pseudo-psychological fashion. It is a case of moments of social reality and construction and their men, not particular men and their moments (Goffman, 1967). This is vitally important to remember – you are not people watching but process and practice watching.

Finally, alongside written observations, the use of the photographic – or even video – image may also be useful to you in your research into race and racism (see Christian et al., 2010; Pink, 2007). As we have noted above, cultural images and film can be used as data. In an ethnographic context the use of the camera can yield powerful and revealing images. Prime examples of this in the study of race can be found in the work of Mitchell Duneier. Collaborating with Pulitzer Prize winning photographer Ovie Carter, Duneier's images in *Sidewalk* powerfully illustrate the plight of African American street dwellers in the sidewalks of contemporary New York (Duneier, 1999; see also Duneier, 2004, 2006; Liebow, 1967).

Achieving Empathy and (not) 'Going Native'

If any group of persons develops a meaningful life once you get close to the petty contingencies of members' daily rounds, the whole point of ethnography then is to try to see the world you are investigating as it is experienced, understood, interpreted, given meaning, acted upon and socially constructed by its members. Via this process you will learn and appreciate the meaning given to actions, events and objects (including persons) in that world. Moreover, you are trying to achieve some sort of intersubjective interpretation and empathetic understanding – some *Verstehen*. Seeing the world as your informants see it, and empathising with their views may jar with your own biases, but, as we argued in Chapter 4, it is important to try to suspend your own values and see the world as your informants see it. As we have already noted,

suspending your own values and prejudices may be a personal challenge. However, this is essential if you are to *understand-through-empathising*.

Having said this, as with much ethnography and qualitative work, you must avoid what is termed ‘going native’, that is weaving yourself into the fabric of the reality of your informants to such a degree that you are unable to see things from the critical and interpretive distance of the researcher – that they become invisible through routinisation not only to the persons or groups you are studying, but to *you*.

A final point to note is that in cross-cultural settings (see Liamputtong, 2010) one can very easily ‘put one’s foot in it’ whilst attempting to have a hand in the activities of cultural groups. In such settings you as researcher may need to show ‘cultural sensitivity’ as regards such things as the ‘*social, familial, cultural, religious, historical and political backgrounds*’ (Jackson and Mead Niblo, 2003, cited in Liamputtong, 2010: 87) of those with whom you come into contact. Again, not only will this aid interpersonal interaction, but will be essential to your interpreting action and appreciating experiences in a way that they are understood to those you are studying.

Putting Yourself in the Picture

Academics often air concerns about the effect of the researcher on the setting or context – to what extent he/she as an embodied participant in those settings and contexts ‘contaminates’ (see our comments on naturalistic settings earlier). Observation in qualitative research often involves a sort of reverse contamination, and we think should do, in that you will have your own experiences and perceptions impacted on as part of the research process. One relatively underused aspect of ethnographic work – one that directly allows you to draw on your own experiences – is what is referred to as ‘auto-ethnography’ (see Kenny, 2000).

Ethical Ethnography

Finally, central to ethnographic work in general are ethical considerations. Ethical issues will guide your management of your research, from preparation through execution, to completion, and afterwards. This goes beyond a lay interpretation of ethics to address some quite specific and practical aspects of the research process, and there will often be a set of formal ethical codes of practice laid out by professional bodies in or affiliated to your disciplinary area.⁵ Ethical issues then are something you should think about from the outset.

As you will have gathered from the preceding section, during the course of your research you will be *told, hear, read* and *observe* many things. You will need to ensure that whatever people reveal to you, whatever you observe or whatever materials (documents or records) you acquire are kept confidential. At a practical level, and as your research progresses (and after it has concluded), all audio and video recordings, transcripts, fieldnotes, documents and other data should be kept securely stored. Hard copy

material (including data storage media such as DVDs/CDs/pendrives/external HDs) should be kept in locked cabinets. Digital files should ideally be in some way password protected. This will usually involve anonymising (although see Duneier, 1999) *names*, *places* and even *times*. Not only is this a legal requirement and basic human right, but it will also ensure the well-being of your informants. This may be particularly relevant in race research (for example, female Muslims talking about intimate matters or far-right extremists expressing political viewpoints may have their well-being seriously threatened should their identities become known).

A primary concern is the issue of informed consent. Both aspects of this requirement must be obtained, i.e. *information* must be provided and *consent* obtained (often requiring the drafting of a consent form – see the Appendix (Resource 8) for an example of such a form used in our own research). It may sometimes be the case that participants in your research in some way misinterpret this part of your work. For example, some years ago, one of us was involved in interviewing young ethnic minority offenders. At first, these persons were under the impression that they ‘had to’ be interviewed, and some even thought it was part of their punishment. They had to be informed several times that this was not the case, and they could withdraw at any time if they wished.

A related issue here that you need to keep in mind is any power issues that might be at play. For example, in our own experience of researching into sensitive topics, even though we have taken rigorous steps to ensure informants were well informed and explained the consent-withdrawal basis of the research, we have experienced informants who have felt ‘obliged’ to participate in research, based on a range of power issues they perceived to be at play in the contexts and settings in which the research was carried out (see Chapter 6).

As we have noted, your research may involve exposure to and contact with people in the immediacy of face-to-face encounters. The notion of well-being extends here. You must ensure that your informants do not feel uncomfortable or in any way under pressure to take part in the research or, for example, answer questions they are uncomfortable with (much will depend on your sensitivity as informants may feel uncomfortable about expressing their uncomfortableness!). So tread carefully, and always be aware that you *are* treading.

Of course, you have an ethical obligation to yourself. This may sound back-to-front research-wise, but it is important to remember, as we have suggested, that you yourself may be racialised (just as you may be sexualised, classified, or age-ified by those persons with whom you come into contact [Quraishi, 2008b]). Be aware of this, as it can be a feature of qualitative research – particularly when researching sensitive topics or ‘hard to reach’ groups or settings – that it can cause stress, worry and even danger to the researcher (see Lee-Treweek and Linkogle, 2000).

On the more practical side of things (but still ethically charged), payment and rewards for participating can be thorny issues. A classic example of the problems associated with this can be seen in Vanderstaay’s (2005) study of African American gangs. Vanderstaay paid \$100 to one of his informants, who subsequently went to spend this

money on drugs and was involved in a fatal shooting. You should think carefully about whether you want to do this and if so what form such payments and rewards should take. Again, you should also be aware of potentially culturally sensitive issues pertaining to this.

Finally, although the intention (sometimes requirement) of most research is that it be disseminated or published in some way (see below), there may be ethical issues that cause you to delay or even suspend publication. There may be various reasons for this, not least the risk of potential harm or threat to those you studied or even yourself (cf. Patrick, 1973) (see below).

A general maxim then would be ‘remain ethically sensitive at all times’. Ethical issues may seem ‘obvious’ and unproblematic, but in the live action of research they can easily be overlooked (or inadvertently suspended!).

Analysis and Dissemination

Data alone, be they documentary, image or artefacts, interviews or focus groups, naturally occurring conversation or observational, will not necessarily speak ‘for themselves’. They require some form of analysis, interpretation, presentation and dissemination. Again, it is beyond the remit of this chapter – or this book – to provide a comprehensive overview of types of qualitative analysis (see Lofland et al., 2006; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Saldana, 2000; Silverman, 2001 for excellent examples of how to conduct analysis on qualitative data). Rather, we want now briefly to signpost some ways in which the above data types may be analysed.

Handling and Interacting with Data

Qualitative research of any sort (not just extended ethnography) can (and more often than not, will) generate huge volumes of data, be it boxes of documentary items, pages of interview transcripts, or volumes of fieldnotes, and these need to be made sense of – to be analysed. Analysis of qualitative data can be quite demanding on the researcher and is to some extent ‘unteachable’. What we mean by this is that much depends on the researcher’s ‘insight’. This is not an attempt to mystify the procedure, but it does point to the very human aspect of qualitative research in general that we have pointed to in this and the preceding chapter. Moreover, as we have noted above, analysis is part and parcel of the ongoing research experience (rather than something you simply ‘do at the end’). Qualitative data collection and analysis are *iterative* in nature, which means you analyse, sample and reanalyse ‘as you go’.

The degree of formality you might use in analysing qualitative data can range from looking for *themes* in your interview transcripts, fieldnotes or documents/artefacts to attempting to identify distinct codes and concepts and build these into some sort of

'grounded' theory (see below). There are nowadays dedicated software packages (known as Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software, or CAQDAS) that will help you to conduct such analyses on large data sets.⁶ Interestingly, in actual published work based on qualitative data there is often a marked absence of explicit description of how qualitative data analysis was carried out.

Qualitative Content, Emergent Themes and the Construction of Meaning

We started our discussion earlier in this chapter by looking at documentary sources. There are several ways that these sources might be analysed (see the texts cited above for excellent examples). One good way to analyse documents – particularly printed news media – is via what is referred to as content analysis (see e.g. Krippendorff, 2004). For example, a number of researchers on Islamophobia have utilised content analysis of print and other forms of media (see e.g. Saeed, 2007).

Images, cartoons, photographs and videos can also be analysed for their 'content'. One useful way to analyse this type of data for their 'meaning' is through semiotic analysis. Semiotics refers to the science of signs. Although derived from linguistics, semiotics can be useful in the analysis of imagery and photographs (see e.g. Bignell, 2002; Godazgar, 2007).

Data generated from interviews and focus groups are often subject to some sort of thematic analysis, as mentioned above. At a basic – but sometimes sufficient – level you effectively scan the data – in the form of interview transcripts – for reoccurring themes. These can be ones that your informants explicitly cite, or ones that you feel reside in your data (see Essed [1991] who develops a useful framework for analysing verbal accounts of racism in race research). Whatever themes you focus on, they must reflect as much as possible the reality of the lived experience that you claim they represent. One way of doing this is to use terms – or *in vivo codes* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) – that are used by the people themselves. For those researchers drawing on naturally occurring conversation (or even interview encounters), very particular types of analysis can be used. The field of conversational analysis as pioneered by American sociologist Harvey Sacks (see Sacks, 1992) provides some quite sophisticated ways to analyse talk. One way of doing this (and one that is of particular relevance to those involved in race and racism research) is the use of membership categorisation analysis (see Hester and Eglin, 1997). For example, at the time of writing this book, the 'N-' word was receiving much media attention in the UK following its use by a popular TV celebrity. This is a prime example of a 'word' that can, and often is, used to categorise pejoratively members of black communities (see Watson, 1997).

Observational data from fieldnotes can be also subject to similar thematic analysis. In the case of this type of ethnographic data, again, there may be no need to analyse your data with the aim of contributing to or generating theory. Rather, such thematic

analysis may be sufficient for you to present a ‘thick’ description (Geertz, 1973) of the sites and settings in which you have researched.

Generating Theory

More formally, the question of concept and theory development can come into the analysis of qualitative data. However, this is different to quantitative based studies’ relationship to theory development (or the status of generalised theory of some objective social reality *per se*). As we noted above, from a social constructionist perspective it is too blunt to suggest there are ‘facts’ that exist outside of people’s ability to socially construct them – to talk, act and negotiate them into being. As Hammersley tells us, in much qualitative research:

*The search for universal laws is rejected in favour of **detailed descriptions** of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the social rules or patterns that constitute it.* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 8; emphasis added)

Having said that, your work may well generate particularly important, or ‘key’ concepts. Again these can be not only important to any wider statements you want to make, but can – and should – reflect the experiences, perceptions and meanings of race and racism of those whom you are researching. For example, we use the key concept of ‘no-go zone’ in the following chapter, which is derived from and directly reflects the experiences of a particular group of persons in a particular cultural and spatial context.

Even though the relationship of qualitative research to theory is different to quantitative work, it is not (and should not – see Chapter 4) be detached from it. Your work may still involve the application of theoretical concerns. For example, in the following chapter we show how a particular theory or perspective of race – critical race theory (Crenshaw et al., 1995) – has been applied to the study of a particular ethnic group. One advantage of using wider theoretical discussion in this way is that your work can be interpreted within a wider academic discourse of race and racism, rather than simply providing a description of or an insight into a particular group or set of practices. At a looser level than might be used in quantitative conceptual use, what are referred to as ‘definitive’ concepts and ‘sensitising’ concepts (Blumer, 1954) might also be identified, that is, concepts that function as, in effect, ‘eye-openers’ rather than ‘building blocks’ of any formal theory.

More formally, ‘grounded theory’ can be used to analyse data from qualitative studies (both data from fieldnotes and from qualitative interviews). This involves careful coding of your data leading to the development of concepts and categories and ultimately some theoretical propositions that are derived from (grounded in) a close and detailed analysis of your data based in comparison and contrasts of phenomena that you observed or are reported (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

More specialist forms of analysis do exist, but require some degree of specialist training and often empathy with the particular ontological, epistemological and procedural foundations that underpin them. Good examples of more radical types of analysis are practised by ethnomethodologists (which heavily influenced the way conversation analysts discussed above do their work). Both these forms of analysis look at the mundane sense making practice in social interaction.

Presentation and Dissemination

When writing up, we would like to emphasise two things. The first is that you should always give (social, cultural, political and historical) context when writing up and presenting your work. This is vital and, as you will see in our case studies in Chapter 6, essential to fully understanding how the notion of race operates and how it realises itself in any given cultural, institutional or everyday context. A thorough contextualisation is essential in any comparative work across cultures. Second, we noted above the importance of language, and more specifically, of verbal accounts. In writing up your research we would urge you to draw on verbatim extracts from interviews (after having followed necessary ethical guidelines). The extent to which we will use verbatim interview extracts in the following chapter attests to the importance we put on them.

Unless you are carrying out your research ‘for the fun of it’, you will want to – or, if funded or doing your research in a work setting or practice/policy context, be expected to – present, disseminate or publish your work. This final stage of your research should not be underestimated as you will have some important decisions to make. As Essed (2004) notes, with race and racism research there will always be consequences of publishing your work both inside and outside the academy.

The first of these decisions will of course be whether to disseminate your findings at all, or, perhaps more realistically, which ‘bits’ to disseminate. Such decisions will most likely rest not on the quality of your findings (you do not think they are ‘good enough’ to disseminate), but on the potential consequences of dissemination. For example, if you feel that there may be potentially negative consequences for any of the people you are studying or that they may be put in harm’s way at all, you may decide to withhold your findings (see e.g. Pittaway et al., 2010). This of course may also apply to any such potential consequences for yourself (see Patrick [1973] for a classic example of this dilemma). A second factor will be to consider your intended audience. This will rest largely on what you think your intended audience will find intelligible, relevant, useful or interesting. As Hammersley (1992) notes, ‘*the kinds of research questions and findings that might be of interest to practitioners and researchers are likely to be somewhat different*’ (cited in Bryman, 2004: 277). Thus, in the case of practitioners, your writing will need to have some relevance to practice within that particular institutional and organisational context, and for policy makers your work may need to be couched in legislative or legal frameworks. Your work might even

take the shape of or inform published texts and guides whose key aim is tackling racism, perhaps directed at certain institutions, organisations or practitioner contexts (see e.g. Clements and Spinks, 2009; Dadzie, 2005; Dominelli, 1997; Thompson, 1997). A common mode of dissemination is in the form of a report, containing a list of recommendations for practice and policy, with very little theory. This is not always easy to do, especially if you are trying to 'translate' findings from academic work that might be heavily conceptual and theoretical into recommendations which are highly practical and applied. Your own exposure to organisational and institutional practice and contingencies will no doubt aid this translation. It is however a process that can have its difficulties. For example, in a piece of research one of us was involved in once, we had to present sociological findings to a group of chemists and physicists looking to improve cosmetic products. The translation of sociological theory into hair care practice was not an easy task!

Writing for other academic researchers may come a little easier to you, as you will have just emerged from the research experience and so can write extensively about all aspects of your work, from highly conceptual aspects to biographical and reflexive ones. Your 'recommendations' here will most likely be limited to 'recommendations for future research' or suggestions as to how concepts or theoretical standpoints may be reconsidered on the basis of your findings (see Chapter 6). Of course, there may be a range of academic conferences, journals (including specialist ones looking at racial issues⁷) or even book chapters in and through which your work could be disseminated to a wider academic audience.

Writing for the public will probably not be a demand placed on you in your research. You may however be asked to write documents for public consumption (anything from flyers and posters to information packs and brochures). You may even have your work disseminated through the media (TV, newspapers, documentaries). Again, these will need to be pitched in a certain way and are likely not only to contain little if any theory, but also to contain little in the way of explicit policy recommendations or guidelines for institutional practice. Instead, a 'user-friendly' model of communication aimed at raising awareness of race issues and suggesting steps people can take to avoid or respond to instances of racism may be called for. You may need to take steps however to avoid oversimplification, sensationalisation or even misrepresentation of your work (see Silverman, 2010).

Whichever 'market' you are aiming your work at, we believe the presentation of it must serve a dual function. It needs to be both informative and interesting (see Lofland et al., 2006); representative and readable (see Atkinson, 1992). There is a certain tension implied here, and Atkinson (1992: 5) has suggested that '*the more readable the account, the more it corresponds to the arbitrary conventions of literary form: the more "faithful" the representation, the less comprehensible it must become*'. However, you need to remember that qualitative research is about people, about human experience and identities, and the social construction of race, racism and racialisation. Because of this, your work must aim to 'connect' with your audience in some way.

One final consideration is the potential reception of your work. We have already noted the problem of achieving value free research. There may also be an awareness of this on the part of the audience, which may lead to accusations of bias or hidden agendas (see Becker, 1967).

Summary

Although continuing our emphasis on contemporary and everyday contexts, our focus in this chapter has turned quite deliberately to qualitative research methods. As we noted at the outset, the chapter does not constitute a 'catch-all' of qualitative research methods, which would be beyond the scope of a single chapter (or even a book of this size), but rather has had as its main aim the presentation of what we regard as important issues for you to consider in your research.

We began the chapter by examining documentary sources, several of which have been pointed to in earlier chapters. Following this we spent some time examining the centrality of language in the context of research work, from formal interviews to naturally occurring conversation. The bulk of the chapter examined ethnographic work and the various contingencies that can arise when exposing oneself to and immersing oneself in the lifeworld of those persons and groups in naturally occurring sites, settings and contexts. Following this we presented a brief overview of ways in which qualitative data might be recorded and analysed. Finally, we concluded by discussing issues pertaining to dissemination and publication.

What we would ask you as a potential researcher into race and racism to do is to think about the nature, practice and methods of qualitative research both in general, and as they might pertain to your own research and practice in particular. In order to go some way to illustrate some of these methods, and some of the contingencies of qualitative research mentioned in this and previous chapters, in the following chapter we shall outline three particular case studies, which have to a large extent influenced the writing of this book.

Notes

- 1 One of the best general introductions to social research is Bryman's (2012) text *Social Research Methods*. For introductions to qualitative research more specifically, we suggest looking at Silverman (2006, 2010) for equally comprehensive and accessible introductory texts.
- 2 The concentration camp tattoo being a classic example of this type of racial 'branding'.
- 3 A classic example of this being the speculation around the late Michael Jackson's change in skin colour over his adult life.
- 4 We are of course not naively claiming that you can ever truly know and understand what it is like to a member of the culture you are investigating, but you can expose

yourself to the ‘*daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject*’, as Goffman termed it, in the hope of making some sense of them, and observing how they are made sense of by those you are studying.

- 5 For example, in the UK, those issued by the British Sociological Association, or British Psychological Society.
- 6 See <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/sociology/research/researchcentres/caqdas/>.
- 7 Good examples of academic journals focusing on race and ethnicity are *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (Routledge), *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Routledge), *Ethnicities* (Sage).