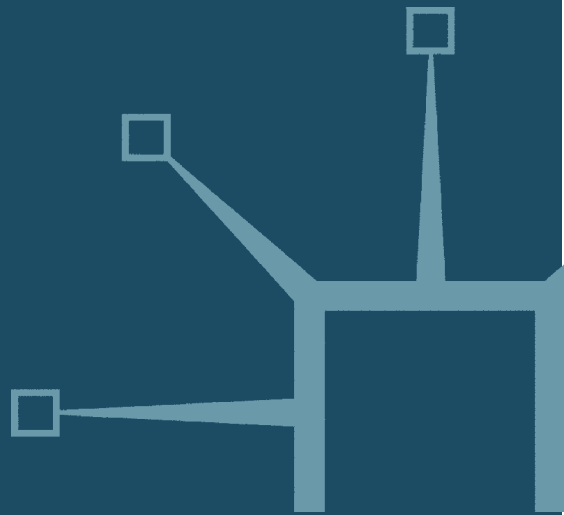


palgrave  
macmillan

# Qualitative Research for Physical Culture

---

Pirkko Markula and Michael Silk



## Qualitative Research for Physical Culture

*Also by Pirkko Markula*

WOMEN AND EXERCISE: The body, Health and Consumerism (*co-edited*)

OLYMPIC WOMEN AND THE MEDIA: International Perspectives (*edited*)

CRITICAL BODIES: Representations, Identities and Practices of Weight and Body Management (*co-edited*)

FEMINIST SPORT STUDIES: Sharing Joy, Sharing Pain (*edited*)

FOUCAULT, SPORT AND EXERCISE:  
Power, Knowledge and Transforming the Self (*co-authored*)

MOVING WRITING: Crafting Movement for Sport Research (*co-edited*)

*Also by Michael Silk*

SPORT AND NEOLIBERALISM (*co-authored*)

CORPORATE NATIONALISM: Sport, Cultural Identity and Transnational Marketing (*co-edited*)

QUALITATIVE METHODS FOR SPORTS STUDIES (*co-edited*)

# Qualitative Research for Physical Culture

Pirkko Markula

*University of Alberta, Canada*

Michael Silk

*University of Bath, UK*

palgrave  
macmillan



ISBN 978-0-230-23024-8

ISBN 978-0-230-30563-2 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230305632

© Pirkko Markula and Michael Silk 2011

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2011 978-0-230-23023-1

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6–10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2011 by  
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries

ISBN 978-0-230-23023-1      hardback  
ISBN 978-0-230-23024-8      paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

# Contents

<i>List of Tables</i>	vi
<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Boxes</i>	viii
<i>Preface: The 7Ps of Qualitative Research</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<b>Part I Design</b>	
1 The Purpose of Research in Physical Culture	3
2 Paradigmatic Approaches to Physical Culture	24
3 The Process of Qualitative Research in Physical Culture	57
<b>Part II Doing</b>	
4 Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Interviewing	81
5 Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Textual Analysis	112
6 Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Narrative Analysis	135
7 Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Field Methods	149
<b>Part III Dissemination</b>	
8 Presentation (and Representation)	177
9 The Promise	196
Conclusion	225
<i>References</i>	230
<i>Index</i>	247

# List of Tables

2.1	Different paradigms	26
4.1	Types of interviews	84
4.2	The role of interviewer and types of interview questions	85
5.1	Types of discourse analysis	118
5.2	Critical discourse of a <i>Health</i> magazine cover	122
C1	The seven Ps of qualitative research in physical culture	226

# List of Figures

3.1	Deductive design	58
3.2	Example 1: Self-esteem in injured male ice-hockey players	59
3.3	Example 2: Social physique anxiety in physically active female university students	59
3.4	Qualitative design	60
3.5	Example 1: Research question: How do male ice-hockey players experience the time they are injured?	61
3.6	Example 2: Research question: What do physically active female university students think of their bodies?	62
4.1	The interview guide approach	87
4.2	Constant comparative method	99
4.3	Five steps of meaning condensation	104
5.1	CDA	118
6.1	Order of the memory work group discussion	146

# List of Boxes

1.1	The Nuremberg code	12
1.2	Ethical dilemmas for qualitative researchers	21
2.1	Paradigm definition	25
4.1	Content of a method section for qualitative interviewing	82
4.2	Type of interview & researcher's paradigm	86
4.3	Types of interview questions	89
5.1	Content of a method section for qualitative textual analysis	113
5.2	Conducting critical discourse analysis	120
5.3	Meanings of camera angles	121
5.4	Johnson's cultural studies approach	125
5.5	Major differences between critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian discourse analysis	130
5.6	Foucauldian discourse analysis	131
6.1	Content of a method section for narrative analysis	136
6.2	Types of narrative methods	137
6.3	Analysis of narrative practice	144
7.1	Content of a method section for participatory action research (PAR)	150
7.2	Content of a method section for qualitative case study research	155
7.3	Content of a method section for qualitative ethnography	161
8.1	Alternative ways of narrative research writing	183
9.1	Qualitative & Quantitative trustworthiness	205
9.2	Assessment of trustworthiness	206
9.3	Validating research stories	208
9.4	Seven stages of validating the craftsmanship of a qualitative researcher	211

9.5	Validation of trustworthy and authentic constructivist research	213
9.6	Evaluative and constructive validation of constructivist research	216
9.7	Validation of CAP ethnography	222

# Preface: The 7Ps of Qualitative Research

## Purpose of the book

Physical culture as a field includes several scholarly disciplines, such as adaptive physical activity, dance studies, leisure studies, outdoor education, physical cultural studies, physical education, recreation, sport development, sport history, sport management, sport pedagogy, sport philosophy, sport policy, sport and exercise psychology, and the sociology of sport. All of these disciplines have utilised qualitative methods to examine various expressions, experiences and structures of the physical. Like the field of physical culture, qualitative research includes multiple research designs, methods and ways of presenting this type of research. These different, sometimes contradictory and messy, understandings of what counts as good qualitative research can be extremely confusing for students and scholars. This book is designed to aid qualitative researchers in negotiating some of these meanings as they take their journeys through the research process. To make sense of this multiplicity and to offer guidance for researchers and students across the interdisciplinary field of physical culture, we have structured the book based on our experiences as teachers and researchers of **designing, doing, and disseminating** qualitative research. To make further sense of the qualitative research process, we have divided it into **7Ps: Purpose, Paradigms, Process, Practice, Politics of Interpretation, Presentation and the Promise** of qualitative research. Below we explain the structure of the book in more detail.

The first 3 Ps – **Purpose, Paradigms** and **Process** – relate to the design of the research process. By this, we mean the plan and structure of the qualitative research project.

**Purpose:** Why should a researcher engage in qualitative research? To map, to critique or to create social change? What are the ethical considerations? What kinds of qualitative research are meaningful?

**Paradigms:** What specific parameters does the qualitative researcher choose for the research project? Post-positivist, humanist, poststructuralist/modern?

**Process:** How does a qualitative research project look? Each project should include some form of to include an introduction, literature review, method section, analysis/discussion and conclusion.

Because the collection of empirical material and its interpretation are difficult to separate, we have combined the next 2 Ps – **Practices** and **Politics of Interpretation** – together in a set of chapters that outline common methodological practices and ways in which to interpret empirical material in qualitative physical culture studies.

**Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Interviewing:** What are different types of interviews? How are they used? How are they analysed?

**Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Textual Analysis:** What are the different types of textual analyses? How are they used? How are they analysed?

**Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Narrative Analysis:** What is narrative analysis? How is it practised? How is empirical material from narratives analysed?

**Practice and the Politics of Interpretation: Field Methods:** What are the different types of field methods? How are they used? How is empirical material from field methods analysed?

The final 2Ps – **Presentation and The Promise** – consider the process of writing and disseminating qualitative research. Further, we consider how to judge qualitative research and to what standards the work should be held.

**Presentation:** What are the different ways of writing-up qualitative research results? What are the various ways in which qualitative research can be **presented** to diverse audiences – dissertation committee, grant bodies, journal editorial board, established conventions of academic research, communities outside of academia.

**The Promise:** What is good quality qualitative research? Given that qualitative research includes multiple ways of approaching, understanding and conducting research, what are the multiple criteria by which to judge the quality of such research and how to choose between such criteria.

## How to use this book

While the 7Ps offer a general pathway through the journey of qualitative research, researchers with different levels of experience engage in qualitative research for multiple reasons. Consequently, while the 7Ps approach aims to map out an entire research project in a comprehensive

manner, certain components of the text will be more valuable for some readers, while other sections more useful for others. It is important to note that all the 7Ps are interrelated, but some might take precedence over others during certain qualitative projects. In addition, researchers at different points of their research careers might find different Ps more relevant.

The undergraduate researcher who embarks on a qualitative research project for the very first time, may find it relevant to start with the process (Chapter 3) of doing research to gain an overarching picture of what a research project may look like and how it could be constructed. In addition, these researchers might focus on learning how to practise the different qualitative methods (or practices) (Chapters 4–7) before engaging in a discussion of the different paradigmatic approaches.

The more experienced graduate researchers will need to have a greater understanding of how their research is philosophically grounded within the parameters of certain paradigmatic approaches. They could, thus, attend more closely to the discussion in Chapter 2 and consider how the methodological practices, the interpretation of the empirical material and the judgement of their work are underpinned by the paradigmatic considerations.

Given that the field of physical culture is informed by many different academic disciplines, a researcher wishing to be introduced to the logic of qualitative methodologies may well focus on the discussion of paradigms in Chapter 2 and their connections to various methodological practices (Chapters 4–7). Seasoned academics already familiar with the structure of qualitative research might consider such aspects of qualitative research as employing previously unfamiliar forms of qualitative methods or using alternative forms of writing style (Chapter 8). Meanwhile, researchers interested in the political purpose (see Chapter 1) of their project would likely address the various links between the purpose and the promise to which their work might be held (Chapter 9). Finally, as this book is offered as a teaching tool for various research methods courses, it should provide an invaluable tool for researchers to guide their students.

# Acknowledgements

**Pirkko Markula:** I would like to thank the students in PERLS 581 course for providing the initial inspiration for this book. I am particularly thankful for Nike Ayo, Marianne Clark, Jennifer Hardes and Judy Liao, who provided extremely valuable feedback during the writing process. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta for providing the necessary academic support for me to complete this book. I am also deeply indebted to my previous fellow graduate students at the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, my advisor Synthia Sydnor, and Norman Denzin, whose initial belief and support for qualitative work in physical culture has been my continual inspiration. Finally, I would like to extend personal thanks to Jim Denison, whose reflections on qualitative research and alternative ways of writing and whose personal support have made writing this book possible.

**Michael Silk:** There are a number of colleagues and students with whom I have had healthy debate concerning research methodology. Professor Ann Hall stimulated this interest seventeen years ago when I took her 'research methods' class at the University of Alberta. Since then, colleagues, especially, John Amis, David Andrews and Anthony Bush, and former and current graduate students such as Perry Cohen, Jess Francombe, Andrew Grainger and Josh Newman have ensured that continued discussion about the philosophy of research is kept alive. I owe a considerable debt to those who have produced the numerous research texts and articles that provide the basis for this book; the work of Norman Denzin continues to inspire. There are a number of groups of students who have endured previous drafts of this text and provided invaluable feedback. In part, the text of this book comes out of the final year 'Undergraduate Research Seminar' students in the Department of Education at the University of Bath. Finally, and as ever, my wife Jennie and my daughter Nancy put up with me during the inspiring (and not so inspiring!) moments involved in producing this text.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Part I

## Design

In this section, we address three of the 7 Ps of qualitative research: **Purpose, Paradigms and Process**. Chapter 1 focuses on the *purpose* of research. For example, we ask readers to consider why they are planning to engage in qualitative research. Who will be influenced by the results? What kind of qualitative research is meaningful? We also consider the ethics of conducting qualitative research. In Chapter 2, we consider the role of *paradigmatic approaches* to qualitative research in physical culture and what the paradigmatic parameters mean for the research process. It is likely that qualitative researchers will find themselves carefully negotiating paradigmatic boundaries when defining the purpose and practice for their research. We then introduce the actual *process* of doing physical cultural research in Chapter 3.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 1

## The Purpose of Research in Physical Culture

In this chapter, we will

- Introduce the term qualitative research;
- Introduce the term physical culture;
- Discuss the possible purposes for qualitative research in physical culture;
- Discuss the ethical conduct of qualitative research in physical culture.

Within this chapter we offer an entry point into the conduct of qualitative research by focusing on the *purpose* of qualitative research. Why is this work important? What will it say that has any value? Is this project meaningful, and if so, to whom? The purpose of research will frame its design, practice and presentation. Qualitative researchers may undertake a piece of research to convince policy makers, to alter public opinion, to drive consumption of a product, to provide evidence on an issue, to expose instances of injustice, to offer competing voices or points of view, to interrogate taken-for-granted ideas or assumptions, to save lives, to make people 'better' (physically, socially), or to advance understanding of a particular phenomenon. While we do not value one purpose over another, it is important to have a clear purpose that will guide the researcher through the entire conduct of the research. Before it is possible to define a purpose, it is important to understand the terms 'qualitative research' and 'physical culture'.

### Understanding qualitative research

Qualitative research has evolved over several decades across several scholarly disciplines. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln observe that

#### 4 *Qualitative Research for Physical Culture*

while qualitative research can be understood as a field of its own right, complex assumptions surround the term as it 'crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters' (2005, p. 2). It is obvious that with such diversity, qualitative research must be understood against the historical context of each discipline and/or field. However, Denzin and Lincoln offer a definition of qualitative research which includes the following components:

- The 'situated' qualitative researcher;
- Multiple material practices;
- Interpretation of meanings.

We will now discuss each of these characteristics in more detail.

##### **The qualitative researcher**

A qualitative researcher is understood as an observer in the world, but always as a 'situated' observer. It is openly acknowledged that the researcher's background and situation influence the research process and shape the research results. Nevertheless, researchers should be aware of their impact through carefully reflecting on the meaning of their part in the process: how do they construct their projects and why do they choose to act in certain ways? Therefore, while qualitative researchers might have multiple aims and purposes, they need to be open about their subjective influences and their reasons for engaging in research. Such a researcher needs to be well immersed in both theoretical and methodological concerns. Denzin and Lincoln note that a qualitative researcher 'works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms' (2005, p. 6). Therefore, it is important to be familiar with several different qualitative approaches. We discuss qualitative research paradigms in Chapter 2 to help researchers of physical culture to negotiate the jungle of competing approaches in an informed manner. Denzin and Lincoln summarise that 'qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry' (*ibid.*, p. 10). We elaborate on the role of the researcher in qualitative research in physical culture in Chapter 3.

##### **Multiple qualitative practices**

Qualitative research is characterised by multiple methodological approaches and practices. As Denzin and Lincoln note: 'Qualitative research,

as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another' (2005, p. 6). For example, qualitative researchers can employ such methods as interviews, textual analysis or narrative, or engage in a 'field' of physical culture more directly by using such methods as case study or ethnography. Often qualitative researchers combine more than one qualitative method to 'situate' better the activity under interest within its context. In any case, the meaning of collecting empirical material is to 'make the world visible' as qualitative researchers 'turn the world into a series of representations' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). We discuss these multiple qualitative methods in Chapters 4–7 and the ways of representing qualitative research in Chapter 8. While qualitative researchers might use multiple methods simultaneously, they adopt one paradigmatic stance at a time.

### **Qualitative interpretation**

Qualitative research practices are designed for an 'interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). This means that qualitative researchers seek information 'directly' from the phenomenon in question by asking people, observing actual situations or interpreting what people have written. Unlike quantitative researchers, who often focus on artificially controlled laboratory situations or mail out pre-validated questionnaires, qualitative researchers have to often venture 'out to the world' to interact directly with people and events to obtain empirical material for their studies. They 'make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (*ibid.*). In qualitative research, the emphasis is placed on 'the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured' (*ibid.*).

In summary, in this book we understand qualitative research as an interdisciplinary field that cuts across several disciplines and fields of research. In addition, qualitative research is multiparadigmatic in nature and is sensitive to multiple practices for collecting empirical material to make the world visible. Qualitative researchers see the world as socially constructed and understand their research as an interaction between researchers, participants and what is studied. Qualitative research is historically and contextually situated within the fields of research. Consequently, throughout this text, we will highlight a variety of qualitative research practices for physical culture, but emphasise the need for a theoretical vocabulary for interpreting any particular aspect of physical culture under scrutiny.

## Understanding qualitative research in physical culture

As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have asserted, qualitative research cuts across several disciplines and several subject matters. The subject matter that crosscuts this book is physical culture. We understand *physical culture* to include multiple forms of *being physically (in)active*. Such practices as exercise, dance, fitness, health, movement, recreation, work, elite sport, recreational sport or coaching sport can engage the physically active body. Researchers in different disciplines are interested in researching physical culture.

Exercise physiology and biomechanics, for example, are disciplines that specialise in the physiological ability and the mechanics of the physical body. Sport medicine and sport nutrition examine how the performance of the human body can be enhanced through preventing injuries or providing optimal nutrition to athletes or other physically (in)active people. They favour laboratory techniques with small samples or large scale, quantitative surveys to collect their information. The disciplines that provide laboratory results related to the physical functioning of the human body are generally classified as **natural sciences** (for further discussion of the principles of this type of research see Chapter 2). There are also a number of **social sciences** that examine physical culture. The social sciences are interested in how physically active 'bodies' act in particular social and cultural environments. Traditionally, disciplines such as physical education, sport history, sport philosophy, sport and exercise psychology, sport management, sport sociology, and adapted physical activity are included in the social science of physical activity. In addition, other areas such as leisure studies, recreation, health and physical activity, sport policy studies, sport coaching, and sport media and journalism have emerged around the topic of physical activity.

Most practitioners of physical culture need information from more than one discipline. For example, physical education teachers, fitness leaders and coaches need to understand the functioning of the physical body as well as how the individual becomes motivated and learns to practice movements. In addition, they need to be aware of funding, marketing, media relations, the social and cultural standing of their profession and the physical culture they represent. For example, to create a training programme coaches need to understand the physiology of stress, work and recovery as well as the dynamics of effective leadership and how to manage different types of people with whom they need to interact. For example, coaching an unfit beginner with low self-esteem would be very different from coaching an elite athlete.

Furthermore, coaches need to understand the institution that employs them, the human relationships within it and how it is located within a particular social or organisational context that will determine funding possibilities. For example, working for a 'minor' sport will not provide the same sponsorship possibilities, spectators and television deals as a 'major' sport provides. Most researchers of physical culture specialise, however, in one aspect of physical culture and tend to choose between natural sciences and social sciences, and further between the different disciplines within each. In this book, we focus on the social sciences. Social science researchers of physical culture can use quantitative methods (see Chapters 2 and 3 for a more detailed discussion of quantitative social science research) or qualitative methods.

It is important to note that qualitative research is a more recent development than its more established quantitative sibling. Therefore, in some physical culture disciplines quantitative research is perceived as the predominant way of conducting research and, thus, some researchers have only been educated in quantitative methods. In addition, quantitative research might be 'valued' in a particular department or among one's peers. Governmental policy makers often prefer quantitative, 'evidence based' research to support their actions and often governmental grant agencies prefer to fund quantitative research that they define as most useful. Despite the dominance of quantitative research in certain disciplines of physical culture, qualitative research has become increasingly popular in sport and exercise psychology, sport history, sport management and adaptive physical activity, whereas physical education and sport sociology already have a strong tradition of qualitative research.

As detailed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative researchers of physical culture also openly acknowledge their subjective influence on the research project and embrace multiple qualitative methods to interpret the meanings embodied in physically active bodies in various social, historical and political contexts. They focus on identifying how experiences become meaningful within certain social and historical contexts. These qualitative social scientists are interested in *how bodies matter* at certain points in time and in certain situations. In other words, qualitative social scientists of the physically active body often aim to understand how individual moments of physicality (e.g., sport, dance, movement, the coaching moment, physical education) are shaped within the social context.

While qualitative social scientists of physical culture embrace multiple movement forms, contexts and meanings, they also need to

engage in *meaningful* research that has a clear purpose. The articulation of a purpose can take different forms depending often on the researcher's paradigmatic stance (see Chapter 2 for further explanation of the paradigms). However, each research project should be, in one way or another, meaningful: it should matter to someone.

**The purpose of qualitative research of physical culture: Mapping, critique and social change**

To further encourage research 'that matters' and the development of a strong purpose, we provide three possible purposes for a good qualitative research project: mapping, critique and/or social change. These purposes can overlap. For example, one research project might achieve more than one purpose. In addition, there might be other reasons why a researcher takes up an investigation. Nevertheless, these three guides are intended to aid a researcher to produce a purposeful, qualitative social science research project.

**Mapping** refers to a research project that aims to provide a general overview or 'topography' of a behaviour, phenomenon, practice or 'field' of physical culture. This is particularly meaningful when not much is previously known about the topic. To create a map of this 'landscape', the researcher needs to draw the relationships between the different facets of the phenomenon under investigation, highlight the differences and impact of each relationship and then link the map with those previously drawn. For example, one might be interested in describing such less examined, rare or niche sports as orienteering, ultimate Frisbee or women's ski jumping, or such exercise forms as Zumba, for which there is not much research information. To provide a map of any of these physical activities, the researcher needs to look at the different relationships that enabled the activity to be born, map who is currently involved, why these particular types of people have chosen to participate, and draw lines that connect the 'new' activity with the landscape of related 'old' sports, and, indeed, with the social forces that allowed an emergence of a new form of activity at this particular point of time. For example, a researcher may well want to think through how a 'sport' such as Red Bull Air Racing has been created and the social forces (e.g., commercialism, sponsorship, a consumer economy, tourism) that have impacted upon this. Or the researcher might want to map why obese children do not want to participate in physical activity. In such a project, the researcher needs to draw a map that connects the social meanings about 'fat', physical activity and children's desire to move, into one picture or map. The researcher would first need to trace how (children's) obesity

has been defined (and by whom) and how it has become a 'problem' worthy of investigation in the current culture. In addition, the researcher needs to describe who the obese children are, why they are physically inactive and what do they like to do in their everyday lives. To examine the relationship between these issues, the researcher would need to examine how physical (in)activity is defined (and by whom), how it is connected to obesity, and why children dislike physical inactivity. These projects that map the general features of a practice of physical culture, are often necessary before the researcher is able to critique or illustrate a need for change.

**Critique** refers to projects that provide a social critique of a behaviour, phenomenon, practice or 'field' of physical culture. In these cases, the researcher has identified a 'problem' beforehand, for example, through previous research literature that has provided a map of the topic at hand. For example, a researcher has identified that certain sports are only accessible to certain populations, which, the researcher determines, is a problem because everyone should have a right to participate in a sport of their choice. The researcher might determine that, for example, youth soccer is available only for highly skilled boys from upper-class areas where there is a well funded, competitive youth coach to maintain a programme. The researcher can then provide a critique of such limited access because it excludes girls, disabled, low-income players and participants who do not want to play competitively. Or the researcher might critique, based on a research project, the ways different elite sports are funded. Or a researcher may want to examine why women athletes, despite their growing numbers, are seldom a part of sport reporting, and the ones that appear in the sport news are selected more for their appearance than their athletic prowess or sporting experience. The researcher can then provide a critique that explains such a practice of exclusion. It is important to note, however, that critique does not necessary lead to change in the situation that was examined.

**Social change** refers to research projects that provide clear suggestions or praxis for creating social change. To engage in such a project, the researcher would usually have to have knowledge of previous research that mapped the behaviour, phenomenon, practice or 'field' of physical culture as well as how this has been critiqued. Again, this could be through understanding previous research, through knowledge gained by doing the project or through the ways physical activity is currently practised in the social context that the researcher aims to change. Against such a background, the suggestions for social change become more meaningful. For example, a researcher interested in women's fitness can

find enough previous research that maps how exercise works as a practice to promote a type of 'ideal' 'feminine' body that characterises the field of fitness. There are also several published academic critiques of the impossible, thin, toned and young feminine body ideal that is often the goal of women's exercise practices. Therefore, it is meaningful to engage in a research project that aims to provide alternative exercise purposes and thus, change the ways in which fitness is socially constructed primarily as a 'workout' for sculpting a culturally defined body 'ideal' or 'norm'.

Purposeful qualitative research projects, whether they map, critique and/or create social change, do not exist in isolation. As they are related to previous academic literatures, they also exist within an array of (fluid) disciplinary boundaries that might prefer particular types of methodological practices. As mentioned earlier, some researchers are opposed to qualitative research because they do not have sufficient knowledge of qualitative methods, they find qualitative research a 'threat' to their research, they do not want to reflect on the purpose of their own research or they simply do not want to know about or accept any other way of doing research from their own. While these are not very sound grounds for rejecting qualitative research, they are, nevertheless, real. We refer to such resistance as the 'politics' of qualitative research. Consequently, all research is always *political*, whether the researcher likes to admit it or not, in a sense that it will have an impact either on the researcher's academic discipline, a broader field of physical culture, or on individual's (including the researcher's) lives. These politics manifest in qualitative researchers' everyday working environment in multiple ways.

In case one faces strong resistance to conducting qualitative research, there are several possible ways to react to the situation. Sometimes it might be best to yield. For example, if one's research supervisor has strong objections, prejudice and no qualifications in qualitative research, it might be best to conduct a good quality, quantitative study instead. Alternatively, one could look for a new, more like-minded research supervisor, department or institution (perhaps more apt at the graduate level). However, in some of the more traditional disciplines of physical culture, it is more difficult to get qualitative research accepted. In a safe case, one should go with the 'flow', but one can also switch to a discipline with a more developed understanding of current trends in social science where it is possible to conduct good qualitative research within a positive environment. If a researcher is located within a quantitative discipline and has little knowledge of but a desire to know more about qualitative research, one can also proceed carefully by first experimenting with combining quantitative and qualitative research and progressing gradually towards

qualitative research. This is often called the 'mixed-methods' approach (see Denscombe, 2007). It is important to emphasise, however, that different types of research should be judged on criteria developed specifically for their type (see Chapter 9). Consequently, there exists 'good' and 'bad' quantitative research, similar to 'good' and 'bad' qualitative research, and the merit of each needs to be determined based on the purpose of the research rather than through mutual comparisons.

We do not promote one, universally acceptable, privileged way of conducting (qualitative) research on physical culture. We are far more interested in – and feel that there is greater progressive potential in – a field that is in tension, in healthy contestation and in debates surrounding the purpose of research and its subsequent impact on method, interpretation and (re)presentation of research. Nevertheless, we want to promote self-reflexive researchers who engage in research that matters. This requires sound knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative research logics and an ability to make informed choices within the institutional constraints of academia. We do hope that qualitative researchers are able to think about purposeful research that is *meaningful* to a range of communities. We suggest that qualitative research into physical culture is characterised by a plurality of research purposes within an environment in which diverse positions exist alongside one another and foster multiple methodological approaches. Meaningful qualitative research should also be meaningful for its participants: it should be conducted in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of its participants. This sensitivity refers to research ethics.

### **Ethical approaches to qualitative research in physical culture**

Everyone conducting social science research on 'human subjects' will be involved in research ethics. While the term 'research ethics' has evoked varying responses from the large and diverse community of social sciences researchers, research ethics refers to guidelines that are developed to ensure that all research participants are treated with dignity and respect. These guidelines suggest that all research should be conducted in a manner that is not harmful for the participants or the researcher.

The current thinking on ethics regarding research that involves human subjects (or participants) stems from the Nuremberg trials after World War II. In these trials, some Nazi scientists were examined with regard to their experiments involving Jewish prisoners. These prisoners were not informed about the procedures of the experiments; neither were they

asked if they wanted to participate and the participants certainly did not benefit from the research. Some died. Based on these trials, the so-called Nuremberg code for ethical standards for biomedical research was developed. To further clarify the ethics of biomedical research, The World Medical Association verified the Declaration of Helsinki in 1964.

### **Box 1.1 The Nuremberg code**

- Voluntary consent is essential
  - Capacity, opportunity, power of participant
  - Extent, possible outcomes of research must be identified
- The research must yield results that are 'good' for society or at least a subset of society
- The research must be justified on the basis of previous research
- The research must avoid all necessary suffering or injury
- Death or disability can not be expected at all
- Risk should never exceed humanitarian benefit
- Any risk should be avoided through facilities and preparation
- Research should only be conducted by scientifically qualified persons
- The participants have the right to withdraw or end the study at any time
- The researcher has the responsibility to end the study if it appears that death, injury or disability might be outcomes of further participation

Modified from McNamee, Olivier & Wainwright (2007).

The current understanding of research ethics therefore stems from ethical abuses by scientists and is thus designed to combat such misconduct, particularly in biomedical research (McNamee, Olivier & Wainwright, 2007). To ensure ethical conduct that is more appropriate for social science research, many disciplinary organisations have developed their own 'ethical standards' and many social science researchers are expected to refer to the ethical requirements of their professional body (e.g., the British Sociological Association standards of ethical research or the British Psychological Association standards of ethical research). The established guidelines provided by a professional association, however, have not always ensured the ethical conduct of the research, as often the ethical principles do not translate into actual practices that would ensure dignity and respect for