

to stay (or leave) the gang. . . . The second set of issues concerned the activities gang members engaged in. These included such things as turf protection, drug sales and use, and violence, as well as conventional activities. An accurate picture of gang members must portray both the nature of their gang involvement and the legal status of their activities. (pp. 54–55)

Rios (2011) relied on several different qualitative research methods to determine how the patterns of punishment experienced by the youth in his study affected them. While his primary method was participant observation, he also used intensive interviews and focus groups. He states,

I shadowed these young men as they conducted their everyday routine activities, such as walking the streets, “hanging out,” and participating in community programs. I walked the streets and rode the bus with them from home to school and as they met with friends or went to the community center after school. There were days when I met them in front of the doorsteps at 8 a.m. and followed them throughout the day until they returned home late at night. (pp. 7–8)

Unlike the personal interviews that rely on closed-ended questions that were discussed in the last chapter, Rios relied only on an interview guide that posed several open-ended questions to the youth in his sample. He called them *life story interviews* because the goal was to place their personal testimonies about their lives at the forefront of his research.

As you can see, Rios approached his research question inductively, not deductively. First, he gathered data. Then, as data collection continued, he interpreted the data and developed analytic categories from which more questions were developed. Rios and other qualitative researchers have provided the field of criminology with in-depth descriptions and idiographic connections of sequences of events that could not have been obtained through other methodologies. They successfully used field research to explore human experiences in depth, carefully analyzing the social contexts in which the experiences occurred.
