PART I

THE BIG PICTURE
Qualitative research continues to be accepted as a valuable approach in social work and in closely allied disciplines. In 1994, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) required that qualitative research methods be taught in all accredited bachelor’s and master’s level social work programs, a requirement renewed in the Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards in 2002 and again in 2008 (CSWE 2002, 2008). Qualitative interest groups began and rapidly expanded within the Society for Social Work Research, the Council on Social Work Education, and through the interdisciplinary International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry. Juried papers and workshops on qualitative research methods and studies became common at social work conferences, if not more frequent in core professional journals. An international journal, Qualitative Social Work, with an emphasis on practice and research started up in 2002, and many new print and electronic journals and resources have been initiated in social work and allied fields.

Despite this growth in interest in qualitative research, there are few U.S. social work texts on the subject and fewer still that cover it in depth. Padgett’s (1998, 2008) text offers a sound introduction to several key methods of qualitative research. In contrast, most American social work textbooks offer a very narrow introduction to qualitative research.