PART III

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION
AND ANALYSIS
Similar to the crown princess in this fairy tale, researchers sometimes think that to be successful and objective interviewers, they must remain apart from respondents by elevating their “expert” status above those interviewed. However, when thinking about interviewing subjects in a qualitative study, researchers are permitted to participate in a truly remarkable enterprise—one that puts the researcher into the learner position and the subject into the expert position. As the princess learned in The Goose Girl, by subjugating herself and shedding her crown and power, she was able to finally understand, appreciate, and advocate for others based on their own experiences as working-class folks (Hale 2003).

For researchers, one purpose of interviewing others is to understand someone else’s life experiences from his/her point of view. Interviewing draws social workers to qualitative research because they have many of the skills necessary to conduct such interviews. Social workers interview clients, consumers, or patients to collect much information about them and to assess the challenges in their lives.

Should a skilled social worker read more about interviewing? This chapter provides a practical guide to qualitative research interviewing through the perspective of a social worker with experience interviewing others as a practitioner and as a researcher, and it is written for social workers who desire to learn