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Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry

In this chapter, we begin our detailed exploration of narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. For each approach, I pose a definition, briefly trace its history, explore types of studies, introduce procedures involved in conducting a study, and indicate potential challenges in using the approach. I also review some of the similarities and differences among the five approaches so that qualitative researchers can decide which approach is best to use for their particular study.

Questions for Discussion

- What are a narrative study, a phenomenology, a grounded theory, an ethnography, and a case study?
- What are the procedures and challenges to using each approach to qualitative research?
- What are some similarities and differences among the five approaches?

Narrative Research

Definition and Background

Narrative research has many forms, uses a variety of analytic practices, and is rooted in different social and humanities disciplines (Daiute &

Lightfoot, 2004). "Narrative" might be the term assigned to any text or discourse, or, it might be text used within the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research (Chase, 2005), with a specific focus on the stories told by individuals (Polkinghorne, 1995). As Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) suggest, narrative can be both a method and ***the phenomenon*** of study. As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals. Writers have provided ways for analyzing and understanding the stories lived and told. I will define it here as a specific type of qualitative design in which "narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17). The procedures for implementing this research consist of focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering (or using ***life course stages***) the meaning of those experiences.

Although narrative research originated from literature, history, anthropology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and education, different fields of study have adopted their own approaches (Chase, 2005). I find a postmodern, organizational orientation in Czarniawska (2004); a human developmental perspective in Daiute and Lightfoot (2004); a ***psychological approach*** in Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998); sociological approaches in Cortazzi (1993) and Riessman (1993); and quantitative (e.g., statistical stories in event history modeling) and qualitative approaches in Elliott (2005). Interdisciplinary efforts at narrative research have also been encouraged by the *Narrative Study of Lives* annual series that began in 1993 (see, e.g., Josselson & Lieblich, 1993), and the journal *Narrative Inquiry*. With many recent books on narrative research, it is indeed a "field in the making" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). In the discussion of narrative procedures, I rely on an accessible book written for social scientists called *Narrative Inquiry* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that addresses "what narrative researchers do" (p. 48).

Types of Narrative Studies

One approach to narrative research is to differentiate types of narrative research by the analytic strategies used by authors. Polkinghorne (1995) takes this approach and distinguishes between "analysis of narratives" (p. 12), using paradigm thinking to create descriptions of themes that hold across stories or taxonomies of types of stories, and "narrative analysis," in which researchers collect descriptions of events or happenings and then configure them into a story using a plot line. Polkinghorne (1995) goes on to

emphasize the second form in his writings. More recently, Chase (2005) presents an approach closely allied with Polkinghorne's "analysis of narratives." Chase suggests that researchers may use paradigmatic reasons for a narrative study, such as how individuals are enabled and constrained by social resources, socially situated in interactive performances, and how narrators develop interpretations.

A second approach is to emphasize the variety of forms found in narrative research practices (see, e.g., Casey, 1995/1996). A ***biographical study*** is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. **Autobiography** is written and recorded by the individuals who are the subject of the study (Ellis, 2004). A ***life history*** portrays an individual's entire life, while a personal experience story is a narrative study of an individual's personal experience found in single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore (Denzin, 1989a). An ***oral history*** consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals (Plummer, 1983). Narrative studies may have a specific contextual focus, such as teachers or children in classrooms (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), or the stories told about organizations (Czarniawska, 2004). Narratives may be guided by a theoretical lens or perspective. The lens may be used to advocate for Latin Americans through using *testimonios* (Beverly, 2005), or it may be a feminist lens used to report the stories of women (see, e.g., Personal Narratives Group, 1989), a lens that shows how women's voices are muted, multiple, and contradictory (Chase, 2005).

Procedures for Conducting Narrative Research

Using the approach taken by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a general procedural guide, the methods of conducting a narrative study do not follow a lock-step approach, but instead represent an informal collection of topics.

1. Determine if the research problem or question best fits narrative research. Narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single life or the lives of a small number of individuals.

2. Select one or more individuals who have stories or life experiences to tell, and spend considerable time with them gathering their stories through multiples types of information. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the stories as "field texts." Research participants may record their stories in a journal or diary, or the researcher might observe the individuals and record fieldnotes. Researchers may also collect letters sent by the individuals; assemble

stories about the individuals from family members; gather documents such as memos or official correspondence about the individual; or obtain photographs, memory boxes (collection of items that trigger memories), and other personal-family-social ***artifacts***. After examining these sources, the researcher records the individuals' life experiences.

3. Collect information about the context of these stories. Narrative researchers situate individual stories within participants' personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place).

4. Analyze the participants' stories, and then "restory" them into a framework that makes sense. ***Restorying*** is the process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework. This framework may consist of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the stories to place them within a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000). Often when individuals tell their stories, they do not present them in a chronological sequence. During the process of restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas. Cortazzi (1993) suggests that the chronology of narrative research, with an emphasis on sequence, sets narrative apart from other genres of research. One aspect of the chronology is that the stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Similar to basic elements found in good novels, these aspects involve a predicament, conflict, or struggle; a protagonist, or main character; and a sequence with implied causality (i.e., a plot) during which the predicament is resolved in some fashion (Carter, 1993). A chronology further may consist of past, present, and future ideas (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), based on the assumption that time has a unilinear direction (Polkinghorne, 1995). In a more general sense, the story might include other elements typically found in novels, such as time, place, and scene (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The plot, or story line, may also include Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space: the personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, and future (continuity); and the place (situation). This story line may include information about the setting or context of the participants' experiences. Beyond the chronology, researchers might detail themes that arise from the story to provide a more detailed discussion of the meaning of the story (Huber & Whelan, 1999). Thus, the qualitative data analysis may be a description of both the story and themes that emerge from it. A postmodern narrative writer, such as Czarniawska (2004), would add another element to the analysis: a deconstruction of the stories, an unmaking of them by such analytic strategies as exposing dichotomies, examining silences, and attending to disruptions and contractions.

5. Collaborate with participants by actively involving them in the research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As researchers collect stories, they negotiate relationships, smooth transitions, and provide ways to be useful to the participants. In narrative research, a key theme has been the turn toward the relationship between the researcher and the researched in which both parties will learn and change in the encounter (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006). In this process, the parties negotiate the meaning of the stories, adding a validation check to the analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Within the participant's story may also be an interwoven story of the researcher gaining insight into her or his own life (see Huber & Whelan, 1999). Also, within the story may be ***epiphanies*** or turning points in which the story line changes direction dramatically. In the end, the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and ***historical context,*** and including the important themes in those lived experiences. "Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told," said Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 20).

Challenges

Given these procedures and the characteristics of narrative research, narrative research is a challenging approach to use. The researcher needs to collect extensive information about the participant, and needs to have a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life. It takes a keen eye to identify in the source material gathered the particular stories that capture the individual's experiences. As Edel (1984) comments, it is important to uncover the "figure under the carpet" that explains the multilayered context of a life. Active collaboration with the participant is necessary, and researchers need to discuss the participant's stories as well as be reflective about their own personal and political background, which shapes how they "restory" the account. Multiple issues arise in the collecting, analyzing, and telling of individual stories. Pinnegar and Daynes (2006) raise these important questions: Who owns the story? Who can tell it? Who can change it? Whose version is convincing? What happens when narratives compete? As a community, what do stories do among us?

Phenomenological Research

Definition and Background

Whereas a narrative study reports the life of a ***single individual***, a ***phenomenological study*** describes the meaning for several individuals of their ***lived experiences*** of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on

describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., grief is universally experienced). The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a "grasp of the very nature of the thing," van Manen, 1990, p. 177). To this end, qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon (an "object" of human experience; van Manen, 1990, p. 163). This human experience may be phenomena such as insomnia, being left out, anger, grief, or undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (Moustakas, 1994). The inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals. This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Beyond these procedures, phenomenology has a strong philosophical component to it. It draws heavily on the writings of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and those who expanded on his views, such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Spiegelberg, 1982). Phenomenology is popular in the social and health sciences, especially in sociology (Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992; Swingewood, 1991), psychology (Giorgi, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1989), nursing and the health sciences (Nieswiadomy, 1993; Oiler, 1986), and education (Tesch, 1988; van Manen, 1990). Husserl's ideas are abstract, and, as late as 1945, Merleau-Ponty (1962) still raised the question, "What is phenomenology?" In fact, Husserl was known to call any project currently under way "phenomenology" (Natanson, 1973).

Writers following in the footsteps of Husserl also seem to point to different philosophical arguments for the use of phenomenology today (contrast, for example, the philosophical basis stated in Moutakas, 1994; in Stewart and Mickunas, 1990; and in van Manen, 1990). Looking across all of these perspectives, however, we see that the philosophical assumptions rest on some common grounds: the study of the lived experiences of persons, the view that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990), and the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994). At a broader level, Stewart and Mickunas (1990) emphasize four ***philosophical perspectives*** in phenomenology:

- *A return to the traditional tasks of philosophy*. By the end of the 19th century, philosophy had become limited to exploring a world by empirical means, which was called "scientism." The return to the traditional tasks of philosophy that existed before philosophy became enamored with empirical science is a return to the Greek conception of philosophy as a search for wisdom.
- *A philosophy without presuppositions*. Phenomenology's approach is to suspend all judgments about what is real—the "natural attitude"—until they are

founded on a more certain basis. This suspension is called "epoche" by Husserl.

- *The **intentionality of consciousness**.* This idea is that consciousness is always directed toward an object. Reality of an object, then, is inextricably related to one's consciousness of it. Thus, reality, according to Husserl, is not divided into subjects and objects, but into the dual Cartesian nature of both subjects and objects as they appear in consciousness.
- *The refusal of the subject-object dichotomy.* This theme flows naturally from the intentionality of consciousness. The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual.

An individual writing a phenomenology would be remiss to not include some discussion about the philosophical presuppositions of phenomenology along with the methods in this form of inquiry. Moustakas (1994) devotes over one hundred pages to the philosophical assumptions before he turns to the methods.

Types of Phenomenology

Two approaches to phenomenology are highlighted in this discussion: hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Van Manen (1990) is widely cited in the health literature (Morse & Field, 1995). An educator, van Manen, has written an instructive book on ***hermeneutical phenomenology*** in which he describes research as oriented toward lived experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the "texts" of life (hermeneutics) (van Manen, 1990, p. 4). Although van Manen does not approach phenomenology with a set of rules or methods, he discusses phenomenology research as a dynamic interplay among six research activities. Researchers first turn to a phenomenon, an "abiding concern" (p. 31), which seriously interests them (e.g., reading, running, driving, mothering). In the process, they reflect on essential themes, what constitutes the nature of this lived experience. They write a description of the phenomenon, maintaining a strong relation to the topic of inquiry and balancing the parts of the writing to the whole. Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation (i.e., the researcher "mediates" between different meanings; van Manen, 1990, p. 26) of the meaning of the lived experiences.

Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants. In addition, Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, ***epoche*** (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the

phenomenon under examination. Hence, "transcendental" means "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas admits that this state is seldom perfectly achieved. However, I see researchers who embrace this idea when they begin a project by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others.

Besides bracketing, empirical, ***transcendental phenomenology*** draws on the *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* (e.g., Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978). The procedures, illustrated by Moustakas (1994), consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a ***textural description*** of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a ***structural description*** of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall **essence** of the experience.

Procedures for Conducting Phenomenological Research

I use the psychologist Moustakas's (1994) approach because it has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions. The conduct of psychological phenomenology has been addressed in a number of writings, including Dukes (1984), Tesch (1990), Giorgi (1985, 1994), Polkinghorne (1989), and, most recently, Moustakas (1994). The major procedural steps in the process would be as follows:

- The researcher determines if the research problem is best examined using a phenomenological approach. The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon.

- A phenomenon of interest to study, such as anger, professionalism, what it means to be underweight, or what it means to be a wrestler, is identified. Moustakas (1994) provides numerous examples of phenomena that have been studied.

- The researcher recognizes and specifies the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. For example, one could write about the combination of objective reality and individual experiences. These lived experiences are furthermore "conscious" and directed toward an object. To fully describe how participants view the phenomenon, researchers must bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences.

- Data are collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Often data collection in phenomenological studies consists of in-depth interviews and multiple interviews with participants. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Other forms of data may also be collected, such as observations, journals, art, poetry, music, and other forms of art. Van Manen (1990) mentions taped conversations, formally written responses, accounts of vicarious experiences of drama, films, poetry, and novels.

- The participants are asked two broad, general questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon? Other open-ended questions may also be asked, but these two, especially, focus attention on gathering data that will lead to a textural description and a structural description of the experiences, and ultimately provide an understanding of the common experiences of the participants.

- ***Phenomenological data analysis*** steps are generally similar for all psychological phenomenologists who discuss the methods (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). Building on the data from the first and second research questions, data analysts go through the data (e.g., interview transcriptions) and highlight "significant statements," sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) calls this step ***horizonalization.*** Next, the researcher develops ***clusters of meaning*** from these significant statements into themes.

- These significant statements and themes are then used to write a description of what the participants experienced (***textural description***). They are also used to write a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon, called ***imaginative variation*** or ***structural description***. Moustakas (1994) adds a further step: Researchers also write about their own experiences and the context and situations that have influenced their experiences. I like to shorten Moustakas's procedures, and reflect these personal statements at the beginning of the

phenomenology or include them in a methods discussion of the role of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

- From the structural and textural descriptions, the researcher then writes a composite description that presents the "essence" of the phenomenon, called the ***essential, invariant structure (or essence)***. Primarily this passage focuses on the common experiences of the participants. For example, it means that all experiences have an underlying ***structure*** (grief is the same whether the loved one is a puppy, a parakeet, or a child). It is a descriptive passage, a long paragraph or two, and the reader should come away from the phenomenology with the feeling, "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

Challenges

A phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals. Knowing some common experiences can be valuable for groups such as therapists, teachers, health personnel, and policymakers. Phenomenology can involve a streamlined form of data collection by including only single or multiple interviews with participants. Using the Moustakas (1994) approach for analyzing the data helps provide a structured approach for novice researchers. On the other hand, phenomenology requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical assumptions, and these should be identified by the researcher. The participants in the study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding. Bracketing personal experiences may be difficult for the researcher to implement. An interpretive approach to phenomenology would signal this as an impossibility (van Manen, 1990)—for the researcher to become separated from the text. Perhaps we need a new definition of epoche or bracketing, such as suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity (LeVasseur, 2003). Thus, the researcher needs to decide how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study.

Grounded Theory Research

Definition and Background

Although a phenomenology emphasizes the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals, the intent of a ***grounded theory study*** is to move

beyond description and to ***generate or discover a theory***, an abstract analytical schema of a process (or action or interaction, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Participants in the study would all have experienced the process, and the development of the theory might help explain practice or provide a framework for further research. A key idea is that this theory-development does not come "off the shelf," but rather is generated or "grounded" in data from participants who have experienced the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, grounded theory is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This qualitative design was developed in sociology in 1967 by two researchers, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who felt that theories used in research were often inappropriate and ill-suited for participants under study. They elaborated on their ideas through several books (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). In contrast to the a priori, theoretical orientations in sociology, grounded theorists held that theories should be "grounded" in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people. Thus, grounded theory provided for the generation of a theory (complete with a diagram and hypotheses) of actions, interactions, or processes through interrelating categories of information based on data collected from individuals.

Despite the initial collaboration of Glaser and Strauss that produced such works as *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) and *Time for Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968), the two authors ultimately disagreed about the meaning and procedures of grounded theory. Glaser has criticized Strauss's approach to grounded theory as too prescribed and structured (Glaser, 1992). More recently, Charmaz (2006) has advocated for a ***constructivist grounded theory***, thus introducing yet another perspective into the conversation about procedures. Through these different interpretations, grounded theory has gained popularity in fields such as sociology, nursing, education, and psychology, as well as in other social science fields.

Another recent grounded theory perspective is that of Clarke (2005) who, along with Charmaz, seeks to reclaim grounded theory from its "positivist underpinnings" (p. xxiii). Clarke, however, goes further than Charmaz, suggesting that social "situations" should form our unit of analysis in grounded theory and that three sociological modes can be useful in analyzing these situations—situational, social world/arenas, and positional cartographic maps for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. She further expands grounded theory "after the postmodern turn" (p. xxiv) and relies on postmodern perspectives (i.e., the political nature of research and interpretation, reflexivity

on the part of researchers, a recognition of problems of representing information, questions of legitimacy and authority, and repositioning the researcher away from the "all knowing analyst" to the "acknowledged participant") (pp. xxvii, xxviii). Clarke frequently turns to the postmodern, poststructural writer Michael Foucault (1972) to help turn the grounded theory discourse.

Types of Grounded Theory Studies

The two popular approaches to grounded theory are the systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2005, 2006). In the more systematic, analytic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), the investigator seeks to systematically develop a theory that explains process, action, or interaction on a topic (e.g., the process of developing a curriculum, the therapeutic benefits of sharing psychological test results with clients). The researcher typically conducts 20 to 30 interviews based on several visits "to the field" to collect interview data to saturate the categories (or find information that continues to add to them until no more can be found). A ***category*** represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher also collects and analyzes observations and documents, but these data forms are often not used. While the researcher collects data, she or he begins analysis. My image for data collection in a grounded theory study is a "zigzag" process: out to the field to gather information, into the office to analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, into the office, and so forth. The participants interviewed are theoretically chosen (called ***theoretical sampling***) to help the researcher best form the theory. How many passes one makes to the field depends on whether the categories of information become saturated and whether the theory is elaborated in all of its complexity. This process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is called the ***constant comparative*** method of data analysis.

The researcher begins with ***open coding***, coding the data for its major categories of information. From this coding, axial coding emerges in which the researcher identifies one open coding category to focus on (called the "core" phenomenon), and then goes back to the data and create categories around this core phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1990) prescribe the types of categories identified around the core phenomenon. They consist of **causal conditions** (what factors caused the core phenomenon), ***strategies*** (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), contextual and ***intervening conditions*** (broad and specific situational factors that influence the strategies), and

consequences (outcomes from using the strategies). These categories relate to and surround the core phenomenon in a visual model called the ***axial coding*** paradigm. The final step, then, is ***selective coding***, in which the researcher takes the model and develops ***propositions*** (or hypotheses) that interrelate the categories in the model or assembles a story that describes the interrelationship of categories in the model. This theory, developed by the researcher, is articulated toward the end of a study and can assume several forms, such as a narrative statement (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a visual picture (Morrow & Smith, 1995), or a series of hypotheses or propositions (Creswell & Brown, 1992).

In their discussion of grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1998) take the model one step further to develop a ***conditional matrix***. They advance the conditional matrix as a coding device to help the researcher make connections between the macro and the micro conditions influencing the phenomenon. This matrix is a set of expanding concentric circles with labels that build outward from the individual, group, and organization to the community, region, nation, and global world. In my experience, this matrix is seldom used in grounded theory research, and researchers typically end their studies with a theory developed in selective coding, a theory that might be viewed as a substantive, low-level theory rather than an abstract, grand theory (e.g., see Creswell & Brown, 1992). Although making connections between the substantive theory and its larger implications for the community, nation, and world in the conditional matrix is important (e.g., a model of work flow in a hospital, the shortage of gloves, and the national guidelines on AIDS may all be connected; see this example provided by Strauss & Corbin, 1998), grounded theorists seldom have the data, time, or resources to employ the conditional matrix.

A second variant of grounded theory is found in the constructivist writing of Charmaz (see Charmaz, 2005, 2006). Instead of embracing the study of a single process or core category as in the Strauss and Corbin (1998) approach, Charmaz advocates for a social constructivist perspective that includes emphasizing diverse local worlds, multiple realities, and the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions. Constructivist grounded theory, according to Charmaz (2006), lies squarely within the interpretive approach to qualitative research with flexible guidelines, a focus on theory developed that depends on the researcher's view, learning about the experience within embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships, and making visible hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity. Charmaz places more emphasis on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals than on the methods of research, although she does describe the practices of gathering rich data, coding the data, memoing, and

using theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006). She suggests that complex terms or jargon, diagrams, conceptual maps, and systematic approaches (such as Strauss & Corbin, 1990) detract from grounded theory and represent an attempt to gain power in their use. She advocates using active codes, such as gerund-based phrases like "recasting life." Moreover, for Charmaz, a grounded theory procedure does not minimize the role of the researcher in the process. The researcher makes decisions about the categories throughout the process, brings questions to the data, and advances personal values, experiences, and priorities. Any conclusions developed by grounded theorists are, according to Charmaz (2005), suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive.

Procedures for Conducting Grounded Theory Research

Although Charmaz's interpretive approach has many attractive elements (e.g., reflexivity, being flexible in structure, as discussed in Chapter 2), I rely on Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) to illustrate grounded theory procedures because their systematic approach is helpful to individuals learning about and applying grounded theory research.

- The researcher needs to begin by determining if grounded theory is best suited to study his or her research problem. Grounded theory is a good design to use when a theory is not available to explain a process. The literature may have models available, but they were developed and tested on samples and populations other than those of interest to the qualitative researcher. Also, theories may be present, but they are incomplete because they do not address potentially valuable variables of interest to the researcher. On the practical side, a theory may be needed to explain how people are experiencing a phenomenon, and the grounded theory developed by the researcher will provide such a general framework.

- The research questions that the inquirer asks of participants will focus on understanding how individuals experience the process and identifying the steps in the process (What was the process? How did it unfold?). After initially exploring these issues, the researcher then returns to the participants and asks more detailed questions that help to shape the axial coding phase, questions such as: What was central to the process? (the core phenomenon); What influenced or caused this phenomenon to occur? (causal conditions); What strategies were employed during the process? (strategies); What effect occurred? (consequences).

- These questions are typically asked in interviews, although other forms of data may also be collected, such as observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. The point is to gather enough information to fully

develop (or ***saturate***) the model. This may involve 20 to 30 interviews or 50 to 60 interviews.

- The analysis of the data proceeds in stages. In open coding, the researcher forms categories of information about the phenomenon being studied by segmenting information. Within each category, the investigator finds several ***properties***, or subcategories, and looks for data to dimensionalize, or show the extreme possibilities on a continuum of, the property.

- In axial coding, the investigator assembles the data in new ways after open coding. This is presented using a ***coding paradigm or logic diagram*** (i.e., a visual model) in which the researcher identifies a ***central phenomenon*** (i.e., a central category about the phenomenon), explores ***causal conditions*** (i.e., categories of conditions that influence the phenomenon), specifies strategies (i.e., the actions or interactions that result from the central phenomenon), identifies the ***context*** and ***intervening conditions*** (i.e., the narrow and broad conditions that influence the strategies), and delineates the **consequences** (i.e., the outcomes of the strategies) for this phenomenon.

- In selective coding, the researcher may write a "story line" that connects the categories. Alternatively, propositions or hypotheses may be specified that state predicted relationships.

- Finally, the researcher may develop and visually portray a conditional matrix that elucidates the social, historical, and economic conditions influencing the central phenomenon. It is an optional step and one in which the qualitative inquirer thinks about the model from the smallest to the broadest perspective.

- The result of this process of data collection and analysis is a theory, a ***substantive-level theory***, written by a researcher close to a specific problem or population of people. The theory emerges with help from the process of ***memoing***, a process in which the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of open, axial, and selective coding. The substantive-level theory may be tested later for its empirical verification with quantitative data to determine if it can be generalized to a sample and population (see mixed methods design procedures, Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Alternatively, the study may end at this point with the generation of a theory as the goal of the research.

Challenges

A grounded theory study challenges researchers for the following reasons. The investigator needs to set aside, as much as possible, theoretical ideas or

notions so that the analytic, substantive theory can emerge. Despite the evolving, inductive nature of this form of qualitative inquiry, the researcher must recognize that this is a systematic approach to research with specific steps in data analysis, if approached from the Strauss and Corbin (1990) perspective. The researcher faces the difficulty of determining when categories are saturated or when the theory is sufficiently detailed. One strategy that might be used to move toward saturation is to use ***discriminant sampling,*** in which the researchers gathered additional information from individuals similar to those people initially interviewed to determine if the theory holds true for these additional participants. The researcher needs to recognize that the primary outcome of this study is a theory with specific components: a central phenomenon, causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences. These are prescribed categories of information in the theory, so the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) approach may not have the flexibility desired by some qualitative researchers. In this case, the Charmaz (2006) approach, which is less structured and more adaptable, may be used.

Ethnographic Research

Definition and Background

Although a grounded theory researcher develops a theory from examining many individuals who share in the same process, action, or interaction, the study participants are not likely to be located in the same place or interacting on so frequent a basis that they develop shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and ***language***. An ethnographer is interested in examining these shared patterns, and the unit of analysis is larger than the 20 or so individuals involved in a grounded theory study. An ***ethnography*** focuses on an entire cultural group. Granted, sometimes this cultural group may be small (a few teachers, a few social workers), but typically it is large, involving many people who interact over time (teachers in an entire school, a community social work group). Ethnography is a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, ***behaviors***, beliefs, and language of a ***culture-sharing group*** (Harris, 1968). As both a process and an outcome of research (Agar, 1980), ethnography is a way of studying a culture-sharing group as well as the final, written product of that research. As a process, ethnography involves extended observations of the group, most often through ***participant observation***, in which the researcher is ***immersed*** in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants. Ethnographers study the meaning of

the behavior, the language, and the interaction among members of the culture-sharing group.

Ethnography had its beginning in the comparative cultural anthropology conducted by early 20th-century anthropologists, such as Boas, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Mead. Although these researchers initially took the natural sciences as a model for research, they differed from those using traditional scientific approaches through the firsthand collection of data concerning existing "primitive" cultures (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). In the 1920s and 1930s, sociologists such as Park, Dewey, and Mead at the University of Chicago adapted anthropological field methods to the study of cultural groups in the United States (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Recently, scientific approaches to ethnography have expanded to include "schools" or subtypes of ethnography with different theoretical orientations and aims, such as structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism, cultural and cognitive anthropology, feminism, Marxism, ethnomethodology, critical theory, cultural studies, and postmodernism (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). This has led to a lack of orthodoxy in ethnography and has resulted in pluralistic approaches. Many excellent books are available on ethnography, including Van Maanen (1988) on the many forms of ethnography; Wolcott (1999) on ways of "seeing" ethnography; LeCompte and Schensul (1999) on procedures of ethnography presented in a toolkit of short books; Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) on the practices of ethnography; and Madison (2005) on critical ethnography.

Types of Ethnographies

There are many forms of ethnography, such as a confessional ethnography, life history, autoethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic novels, and the visual ethnography found in photography and video, and electronic media (Denzin, 1989a; LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992; Pink, 2001; Van Maanen, 1988). Two popular forms of ethnography will be emphasized here: the realist ethnography and the critical ethnography.

The ***realist ethnography*** is a traditional approach used by cultural anthropologists. Characterized by Van Maanen (1988), it reflects a particular stance taken by the researcher toward the individuals being studied. Realist ethnography is an objective account of the situation, typically written in the third-person point of view and reporting objectively on the information learned from participants at a site. In this ethnographic approach, the realist ethnographer narrates the study in a third-person dispassionate voice and reports on what is observed or heard from participants. The ethnographer remains in the

background as an omniscient reporter of the "facts." The realist also reports objective data in a measured style uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, and judgment. The researcher may provide mundane details of everyday life among the people studied. The ethnographer also uses standard categories for cultural description (e.g., family life, communication networks, worklife, social networks, status systems). The ethnographer produces the participants' views through closely edited quotations and has the final word on how the culture is to be interpreted and presented.

For many researchers, ethnography today employs a "critical" approach (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993) by including in the research an advocacy perspective. This approach is in response to current society, in which the systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority serve to marginalize individuals who are from different classes, races, and genders. The ***critical ethnography*** is a type of ethnographic research in which the authors advocate for the emancipation of groups marginalized in society (Thomas, 1993). Critical researchers typically are politically minded individuals who seek, through their research, to speak out against inequality and domination (Carspecken & Apple, 1992). For example, critical ethnographers might study schools that provide privileges to certain types of students, or counseling practices that serve to overlook the needs of underrepresented groups. The major components of a critical ethnography include a value-laden orientation, empowering people by giving them more authority, challenging the status quo, and addressing concerns about power and control. A critical ethnographer will study issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization.

Procedures for Conducting an Ethnography

As with all qualitative inquiry, there is no single way to conduct the research in an ethnography. Although current writings provide more guidance to this approach than ever (for example, see the excellent overview found in Wolcott, 1999), the approach taken here includes elements of both realist ethnography and critical approaches. The steps I would use to conduct an ethnography are as follows:

- Determine if ethnography is the most appropriate design to use to study the research problem. Ethnography is appropriate if the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the beliefs, language, behaviors, and issues such as power, resistance, and dominance. The literature may be deficient in actually knowing how the group works because the group is not in the mainstream, people may not be familiar with the group, or its ways are so different that readers may not identify with the group.

- Identify and locate a culture-sharing group to study. Typically, this group is one that has been together for an extended period of time, so that their shared language, patterns of behavior, and attitudes have merged into a discernable pattern. This may also be a group that has been marginalized by society. Because ethnographers spend time talking with and observing this group, access may require finding one or more individuals in the group who will allow the researcher in—a ***gatekeeper*** or ***key informants (or participants)***.

- Select cultural themes or issues to study about the group. This involves the ***analysis of the culture-sharing group.*** The themes may include such topics as enculturation, socialization, learning, cognition, domination, inequality, or child and adult development (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992). As discussed by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Wolcott (1987, 1994b), and Fetterman (1998), the ethnographer begins the study by examining people in interaction in ordinary settings and by attempting to discern pervasive patterns such as life cycles, events, and cultural themes. ***Culture*** is an amorphous term, not something "lying about" (Wolcott, 1987, p. 41), but something researchers attribute to a group when looking for patterns of their social world. It is inferred from the words and actions of members of the group, and it is assigned to this group by the researcher. It consists of what people do (behaviors), what they say (language), the potential tension between what they do and ought to do, and what they make and use, such as artifacts (Spradley, 1980). Such themes are diverse, as illustrated in Winthrop's (1991) *Dictionary of Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*. Fetterman (1998) discusses how ethnographers describe a ***holistic*** perspective of the group's history, religion, politics, economy, and environment. Within this description, cultural concepts such as the social structure, kinship, the political structure, and the social relations or ***function*** among members of the group may be described.

- To study cultural concepts, determine which type of ethnography to use. Perhaps how the group works needs to be described, or the critical ethnography may need to expose issues such as power, hegemony, and to advocate for certain groups. A critical ethnographer, for example, might address an inequity in society or some part of it, use the research to advocate and call for changes, and specify an issue to explore, such as inequality, dominance, oppression, or empowerment.

- Gather information where the group works and lives. This is called ***fieldwork*** (Wolcott, 1999). Gathering the types of information typically needed in an ethnography involves going to the research site, respecting the daily lives of individuals at the site, and collecting a wide variety of

materials. Field issues of respect, ***reciprocity***, deciding who owns the data, and others are central to ethnography. Ethnographers bring a sensitivity to fieldwork issues (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), such as attending to how they gain access, giving back or reciprocity with the participants, and being ethical in all aspects of the research, such as presenting themselves and the study. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) organize types of ethnographic data into observations, tests and measures, surveys, interviews, content analysis, interviews, elicitation methods, audiovisual methods, spatial mapping, and network research. From the many sources collected, the ethnographer analyzes the data for a ***description of the culture-sharing group***, themes that emerge from the group, and an overall interpretation (Wolcott, 1994b). The researcher begins by compiling a detailed description of the culture-sharing group, focusing on a single event, on several activities, or on the group over a prolonged period of time. The ethnographer moves into a theme analysis of patterns or topics that signifies how the cultural group works and lives.

- Forge a working set of rules or patterns as the final product of this analysis. The final product is a holistic ***cultural portrait*** of the group that incorporates the views of the participants (***emic***) as well as the views of the researcher (***etic***). It might also advocate for the needs of the group or suggest changes in society to address needs of the group. As a result, the reader learns about the culture-sharing group from both the participants and the interpretation of the researcher. Other products may be more performance based, such as theater productions, plays, or poems.

Challenges

Ethnography is challenging to use for the following reasons. The researcher needs to have a grounding in cultural anthropology and the meaning of a social-cultural system as well as the concepts typically explored by ethnographers. The time to collect data is extensive, involving prolonged time in the field. In many ethnographies, the narratives are written in a literary, almost storytelling approach, an approach that may limit the audience for the work and may be challenging for authors accustomed to traditional approaches to writing social and human science research. There is a possibility that the researcher will "go native" and be unable to complete the study or be compromised in the study. This is but one issue in the complex array of fieldwork issues facing ethnographers who venture into an unfamiliar cultural group or system. A sensitivity to the needs of individual studies is especially important, and the researcher needs to acknowledge his or her impact on the people and the places being studied.

Case Study Research

Definition and Background

The entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case, but the intent in ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration. Thus, ***case study*** research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). Although Stake (2005) states that case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied (i.e., a case within a ***bounded system***), others present it as a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). I choose to view it as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a ***case***) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving ***multiple sources of information*** (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case ***description*** and case-based themes. For example, several programs (a ***multi-site*** study) or a single program (a ***within-site*** study) may be selected for study.

The case study approach is familiar to social scientists because of its popularity in psychology (Freud), medicine (case analysis of a problem), law (case law), and political science (case reports). Case study research has a long, distinguished history across many disciplines. Hamel, Dufour, and Fortin (1993) trace the origin of modern social science case studies through anthropology and sociology. They cite anthropologist Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islands, French sociologist LePlay's study of families, and the case studies of the University of Chicago Department of Sociology from the 1920s and 30s through the 1950s (e.g., Thomas and Znaniecki's 1958 study of Polish peasants in Europe and America) as antecedents of qualitative case study research. Today, the case study writer has a large array of texts and approaches from which to choose. Yin (2003), for example, espouses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study development and discusses explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies. Merriam (1998) advocates a general approach to qualitative case studies in the field of education. Stake (1995) systematically establishes procedures for case study research and cites them extensively in his example of "Harper School." Stake's most recent book on multiple case study analysis presents a step-by-step approach and provides rich illustrations of multiple case studies in the Ukraine, Slovakia, and Romania (Stake, 2006).

Types of Case Studies

Types of qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity. They may also be distinguished in terms of the intent of the case analysis. Three variations exist in terms of intent: the single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the ***intrinsic case study***. In a single ***instrumental case study*** (Stake, 1995), the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue. In a ***collective case study*** (or multiple case study), the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site. Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue. Yin (2003) suggests that the multiple case study design uses the logic of replication, in which the inquirer replicates the procedures for each case. As a general rule, qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize from one case to another because the contexts of cases differ. To best generalize, however, the inquirer needs to select representative cases for inclusion in the qualitative study. The final type of case study design is an intrinsic case study in which the focus is on the case itself (e.g., evaluating a program, or studying a student having difficulty—see Stake, 1995) because the case presents an unusual or unique situation. This resembles the focus of narrative research, but the case study analytic procedures of a detailed description of the case, set within its context or surroundings, still hold true.

Procedures for Conducting a Case Study

Several procedures are available for conducting case studies (see Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). This discussion will rely primarily on Stake's (1995) approach to conducting a case study.

- First, researchers determine if a case study approach is appropriate to the research problem. A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases.

- Researchers next need to identify their case or cases. These cases may involve an individual, several individuals, a program, an event, or an activity. In conducting case study research, I recommend that investigators first consider what type of case study is most promising and useful. The case can be single or collective, multi-sited or within-site, focused on a case or on an issue

(intrinsic, instrumental) (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In choosing which case to study, an array of possibilities for ***purposeful sampling*** is available. I prefer to select cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event I want to portray (called "purposeful maximal sampling,"; Creswell, 2005), but I also may select ordinary cases, accessible cases, or unusual cases.

- The data collection in case study research is typically extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. For example, Yin (2003) recommends six types of information to collect: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observations, and physical artifacts.

- The type of analysis of these data can be a ***holistic analysis*** of the entire case or an ***embedded analysis*** of a specific aspect of the case (Yin, 2003). Through this data collection, a detailed description of the case (Stake, 1995) emerges in which the researcher details such aspects as the history of the case, the chronology of events, or a day-by-day rendering of the activities of the case. (The gunman case study in Appendix F involved tracing the campus response to a gunman for 2 weeks immediately following the near-tragedy on campus.) After this description ("relatively uncontested data"; Stake, 1995, p. 123), the researcher might focus on a few key issues (or ***analysis of themes***), not for generalizing beyond the case, but for understanding the complexity of the case. One analytic strategy would be to identify issues within each case and then look for common themes that transcend the cases (Yin, 2003). This analysis is rich in the ***context of the case*** or setting in which the case presents itself (Merriam, 1988). When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a ***within-case analysis,*** followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a ***cross-case analysis***, as well as ***assertions*** or an interpretation of the meaning of the case.

- In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports the meaning of the case, whether that meaning comes from learning about the issue of the case (an instrumental case) or learning about an unusual situation (an intrinsic case). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention, this phase constitutes the "lessons learned" from the case.

Challenges

One of the challenges inherent in qualitative case study development is that the researcher must identify his or her case. I can pose no clear solution to this challenge. The case study researcher must decide which bounded system to study, recognizing that several might be possible candidates for

this selection and realizing that either the case itself or an issue, which a case or cases are selected to illustrate, is worthy of study. The researcher must consider whether to study a single case or multiple cases. The study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case. When a researcher chooses multiple cases, the issue becomes, "How many cases?" There is not a set number of cases. Typically, however, the researcher chooses no more than four or five cases. What motivates the researcher to consider a large number of cases is the idea of "generalizability," a term that holds little meaning for most qualitative researchers (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Selecting the case requires that the researcher establish a rationale for his or her purposeful sampling strategy for selecting the case and for gathering information about the case. Having enough information to present an in-depth picture of the case limits the value of some case studies. In planning a case study, I have individuals develop a data collection matrix in which they specify the amount of information they are likely to collect about the case. Deciding the "boundaries" of a case—how it might be constrained in terms of time, events, and processes—may be challenging. Some case studies may not have clean beginning and ending points, and the researcher will need to set boundaries that adequately surround the case.

The Five Approaches Compared

All five approaches have in common the general process of research that begins with a research problem and proceeds to the questions, the data, the data analysis, and the research report. They also employ similar data collection processes, including, in varying degrees, interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. Also, a couple of potential similarities among the designs should be noted. Narrative research, ethnography, and case study research may seem similar when the unit of analysis is a single individual. True, one may approach the study of a single individual from any of these three approaches; however, the types of data one would collect and analyze would differ considerably. In ***narrative research***, the inquirer focuses on the stories told from the individual and arranges these stories in chronological order. In ethnography, the focus is on setting the individuals' stories within the context of their culture and culture-sharing group; in case study research, the single case is typically selected to illustrate an issue, and the researcher compiles a detailed description of the setting for the case. As Yin (2003) comments, "You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). My approach is to

recommend, if the researcher wants to study a single individual, the narrative approach or a single case study because ethnography is a much broader picture of the culture. Then when comparing a narrative study and a single case to study a single individual, I feel that the narrative approach is seen as more scholarly because narrative studies *tend* to focus on single individual; whereas, case studies often involve more than one case.

From these sketches of the five approaches, I can identify fundamental differences among these types of qualitative research. As shown in Table 4.1, I present several dimensions for distinguishing among the five approaches. At a most fundamental level, the five differ in what they are trying to accomplish—their foci or the primary objectives of the studies. Exploring a life is different from generating a theory or describing the behavior of a cultural group. Moreover, although overlaps exist in discipline origin, some approaches have single-disciplinary traditions (e.g., grounded theory originating in sociology, ethnography founded in anthropology or sociology) and others have broad interdisciplinary backgrounds (e.g., narrative, case study). The data collection varies in terms of emphasis (e.g., more observations in ethnography, more interviews in grounded theory) and extent of data collection (e.g., only interviews in phenomenology, multiple forms in case study research to provide the in-depth case picture). At the data analysis stage, the differences are most pronounced. Not only is the distinction one of specificity of the analysis phase (e.g., grounded theory most specific, narrative research less defined), but the number of steps to be undertaken also varies (e.g., extensive steps in phenomenology, few steps in ethnography). The result of each approach, the written report, takes shape from all the processes before it. A narrative about an individual's life forms narrative research. A description of the essence of the experience of the phenomenon becomes a phenomenology. A theory, often portrayed in a visual model, emerges in grounded theory and a holistic view of how a culture-sharing group works results in an ethnography. An in-depth study of a bounded system or a case (or several cases) becomes a case study.

Relating the dimensions of Table 4.1 to research design within the five approaches will be the focus of chapters to follow. Qualitative researchers have found it helpful to see at this point a general sketch of the overall structure of each of the five approaches. Let's examine in Table 4.2 the structure of each approach.

The outlines in Table 4.2 may be used in designing a journal-article-length study; however, because of the numerous steps in each, they also have applicability as chapters of a dissertation or a book-length work. I introduce them here because the reader, with an introductory knowledge of each approach, now can sketch the general "architecture" of a study. Certainly, this architecture will emerge and be shaped differently by the conclusion of

Table 4.1 Contrasting Characteristics of Five Qualitative Approaches

Characteristics	*Narrative Research*	*Phenomenology*	*Grounded Theory*	*Ethnography*	*Case Study*
Focus	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases
Type of Problem Best Suited for Design	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Grounding a theory in the views of participants	Describing and interpreting the shared patterns of culture of a group	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Discipline Background	Drawing from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology	Drawing from philosophy, psychology, and education	Drawing from sociology	Drawing from anthropology and sociology	Drawing from psychology, law, political science, medicine
Unit of Analysis	Studying one or more individuals	Studying several individuals that have shared the experience	Studying a process, action, or interaction involving many individuals	Studying a group that shares the same culture	Studying an event, a program, an activity, more than one individual

Characteristics	*Narrative Research*	*Phenomenology*	*Grounded Theory*	*Ethnography*	*Case Study*
Data Collection Forms	Using primarily interviews and documents	Using primarily interviews with individuals, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered	Using primarily interviews with 20–60 individuals	Using primarily observations and interviews, but perhaps collecting other sources during extended time in field	Using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents, artifacts
Data Analysis Strategies	Analyzing data for stories, "restorying" stories, developing themes, often using a chronology	Analyzing data for significant statements, meaning units, textural and structural description, description of the "essence"	Analyzing data through open coding, axial coding, selective coding	Analyzing data through description of the culture-sharing group; themes about the group	Analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes
Written Report	Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual's life	Describing the "essence" of the experience	Generating a theory illustrated in a figure	Describing how a culture-sharing group works	Developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases

Table 4.2 Reporting Structures for Each Approach

Reporting Approaches	*Narrative*	*Phenomenology*	*Grounded Theory*	*Ethnography*	*Case Study*
General Structure of Study	• Introduction (problem, questions) • Research procedures (a narrative, significance of individual, data collection, analysis outcomes) • Report of stories • Individuals theorize about their lives • Narrative segments identified • Patterns of meaning identified (events, processes, epiphanies, themes) • Summary (Adapted from Denzin, 1989a, 1989b)	• Introduction (problem, questions) • Research procedures (a phenomenology and philosophical assumptions, data collection, analysis, outcomes) • Significant statements • Meanings of statements • Themes of meanings • Exhaustive description of phenomenon (Adapted from Moustakas, 1994)	• Introduction (problem, questions) • Research procedures (grounded theory, data collection, analysis, outcomes) • Open coding • Axial coding • Selective coding and theoretical propositions and models • Discussion of theory and contrasts with extant literature (Adapted from Strauss & Corbin, 1990)	• Introduction (problem, questions) • Research procedures (ethnography, data collection, analysis, outcomes) • Description of culture • Analysis of cultural themes • Interpretation, lessons learned, questions raised (Adapted from Wolcott, 1994b)	• Entry vignette • Introduction (problem, questions, case study, data collection, analysis, outcomes) • Description of the case/cases and its/their context • Development of issues • Detail about selected issues • Assertions • Closing vignette (Adapted from Stake, 1995)

the study, but it provides a framework for the design issue to follow. I recommend these outlines as general templates at this time. In Chapter 5, we will examine five published journal articles, with each study illustrating one of the five approaches, and explore the writing structure of each.

Summary

In this chapter, I described each of the five approaches to qualitative research—narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. I provided a definition, some history of the development of the approach, and the major forms it has assumed, and I detailed the major procedures for conducting a qualitative study. I also discussed some of the major challenges in conducting each approach. To highlight some of the differences among the approaches, I provided an overview table that contrasts the characteristics of focus, the type of research problem addressed, the discipline background, the unit of analysis, the forms of data collection, data analysis strategies, and the nature of the final, written report. I also presented outlines of the structure of each approach that might be useful in designing a study within each of the five types. In the next chapter, we will examine five studies that illustrate each approach and look more closely at the compositional structure of each type of approach.

Additional Readings

Several readings extend this brief overview of each of the five approaches of inquiry. In Chapter 1, I presented the major books that will be used to craft discussions about each approach. Here I provide a more expanded list of references that also includes the major works.

In narrative research, I will rely on Denzin (1989a, 1989b), Czarniawska (2004), and especially Clandinin and Connelly (2000). I add to this list books on life history (Angrosino, 1989a), humanistic methods (Plummer, 1983), and a comprehensive handbook on narrative research (Clandinin, 2006).

Angrosino, M. V. (1989a). *Documents of interaction: Biography, autobiography, and life history in social science perspective.* Gainesville: University of Florida Press.

Clandinin, D. J. (Ed.). (2006). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narratives in social science research.* London: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1989a). *Interpretive biography.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1989b). *Interpretive interactionism.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
Elliot, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: Sage.
Plummer, K. (1983). *Documents of life: An introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

For phenomenology, the books on phenomenological research methods by Moustakas (1994) and the hermeneutical approach by van Manen (1990) will provide a foundation for chapters to follow. Other procedural guides to examine include Giorgi (1985), Polkinghorne (1989), Van Kaam (1966), Colaizzi (1978), Spiegelberg (1982), Dukes (1984), Oiler (1986), and Tesch (1990). For basic differences between hermeneutic and empirical or transcendental phenomenology, see Lopez and Willis (2004) and for a discussion about the problems of bracketing, see LeVasseur (2003). In addition, a solid grounding in the philosophical assumptions is essential, and one might examine Husserl (1931, 1970), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Natanson (1973), and Stewart and Mickunas (1990) for this background.

Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. Vaile & M. King (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48–71). New York: Oxford University Press.
Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health, 23,* 197–203.
Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research.* Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
LeVasseur, J. J. (2003). The problem with bracketing in phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research, 31*(2), 408–420.
Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*(5), 726–735.
Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Natanson, M. (Ed.). (1973). *Phenomenology and the social sciences.* Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
Oiler, C. J. (1986). Phenomenology: The method. In P. L. Munhall & C. J. Oiler (Eds.), *Nursing research: A qualitative perspective* (pp. 69–82). Norwalk, CT: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41–60). New York: Plenum.

Spiegelberg, H. (1982). *The phenomenological movement* (3rd ed.). The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff.

Stewart, D., & Mickunas, A. (1990). *Exploring phenomenology: A guide to the field and its literature* (2nd ed.). Athens: Ohio University Press.

Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools*. Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Van Kaam, A. (1966). *Existential foundations of psychology*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

On grounded theory research, consult the most recent and highly readable book, Strauss and Corbin (1990), before reviewing earlier works such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978), Strauss (1987), Glaser (1992), or the latest edition of Strauss and Corbin (1998). The 1990 Strauss and Corbin book provides, I believe, a better procedural guide than their 1998 book. For brief methodological overviews of grounded theory, examine Charmaz (1983), Strauss and Corbin (1994), and Chenitz and Swanson (1986). Especially helpful are Charmaz's (2006) book on grounded theory research from a constructionist's perspective and Clarke's (2005) postmodern perspective.

Charmaz, K. (1983). The grounded theory method: An explication and interpretation. In R. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary field research* (pp. 109–126). Boston: Little, Brown.

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Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

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Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology: An overview. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 273–285). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Several recent books on ethnography will provide the foundation for the chapters to follow: Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003); the first volume in the Ethnographer's Toolkit series, *Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research,* as well as the other six volumes in the series by LeCompte and Schensul (1999); and Wolcott (1994b, 1999). Other resources about ethnography include Spradley (1979, 1980), Fetterman (1998), and Madison (2005).

Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., & Delamont, S. (2003). *Key themes in qualitative research: Continuities and changes*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Fetterman, D. M. (1998). *Ethnography: Step by step* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

LeCompte, M. D., & Schensul, J. J. (1999). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research* (Ethnographer's toolkit, Vol. 1). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Wolcott, H. F. (1994b). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wolcott, H. F. (1999). *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.

Finally, for case study research, consult Stake (1995) or earlier books such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), and Yin (2003).

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and method* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Exercises

1. Select one of the five approaches for a proposed study. Write a brief description of the approach, including a definition, the history, and the procedures associated with the approach. Include references to the literature.
2. Take a proposed qualitative study that you would like to conduct. Begin with presenting it as a narrative study, then shape it into a phenomenology, a grounded theory, an ethnography, and finally a case study. Discuss for each type of study the focus of the study, the types of data collection and analysis, and the final written report.