

Phenomenology

Purpose:
Describing individual(s)' experience of phenomena

Disciplinary Origin:
Philosophy

Data Collection & Analysis:
Interview data searched for significant statements that capture essence of participants' perceptions and experiences.

Research Report:
Rich narrative allowing readers to vicariously experience phenomenon through eyes of participants

Ethnography

Purpose:
Describing cultural characteristics of a group of people

Disciplinary Origin:
Anthropology

Data Collection & Analysis:
Extended fieldwork on participant and nonparticipant observations, interviews; documents analyzed during/after study to gain insider's perspective on people and interactions

Research Report:
Extensive description of the physical and social settings aimed at holistic understanding.

Narrative Inquiry

Purpose:
Describing people's lives/stories to add to our understanding

Disciplinary Origin:
Human storytelling & education

Data Collection & Analysis:
Extensive description of the physical and social settings aimed at holistic understanding

Research Report:
Narrative account including patterns, connections, and insights uncovered and carefully synthesized.

Case Study

Purpose:
Addressing research questions through in-depth analysis

Disciplinary Origin:
Multi-disciplinary

Data Collection & Analysis:
Multiple methods and data sources are used to answer specific questions about one or more cases

Research Report:
Holistic narrative which triangulates data and places the case into a meaningful context.

Grounded Theory

Purpose:
Inductively generating a theory describing a phenomenon

Disciplinary Origin:
Sociology

Data Collection & Analysis:
Continual activity running concurrent to analysis as interview and observational data are distilled (or coded) and compared to build a working theory grounded in collected data.

Research Report:
Contains methodological description, then proposes and discusses grounded theory built during research study.