

Chapter 4

Five Qualitative Approaches to Inquiry

Creswell *Qualitative Inquiry* 2e



Key Questions

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



The Five Qualitative Approaches

- Narrative Research
- Phenomenology
- Grounded Theory
- Ethnography
- Case Study



Narrative Research: Definition and Background

- *Spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17)*
- Narrative method begins with the experiences of individuals that are expressed in lived and told stories
- Narrative method provides a means to understand and analyze the stories
- Narrative method is interdisciplinary



Approaches to Narrative Studies

- Differentiate the types of narrative research by the analytic strategies used
 - Approach to narratives
 - Analysis of narratives - create descriptions of themes that hold across stories
 - Narrative analysis - create descriptions of events or happenings and configure them into a story using a plot line
 - Worldview studies - create descriptions such as how individuals are enabled and constrained by social resources
 - Forms of narrative research - biography, autobiography, life histories, personal experience story, contextually focused stories about individuals or organizations, narratives guided by theoretical lenses



Narrative Research Procedures: Clandinin & Connelly (2000)

- Determine if the research problem or question best fits narrative research
- Select one or more individuals who have stories or life experiences to tell
 - Gather stories and analyze for key elements of the story such as time, place, plot, and scene
 - Re-write stories into a chronological “storyline” with basic elements found in good novels (e.g., predicament, conflict, protagonist, struggle, resolution, scene, time)
 - Include detailed themes that arise from the story that provide a detailed discussion of the meaning of the story
- Collect information about the context of the stories



Narrative Research Procedures: Clandinin & Connelly (2000)

- Analyze the stories and “restory” into a general framework
 - Gather stories and analyze for key elements of the story such as time, place, plot, and scene
 - Re-write stories into a chronological “storyline” with basic elements found in good novels (e.g., predicament, conflict, protagonist, struggle, resolution, scene, time)
 - Include detailed themes that arise from the story that provide a detailed discussion of the meaning of the story
- Collaborate with participants by actively involving them in research



Narrative Research Challenges

- Extensive information about the participant is needed
- Researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life
- Care must be given to uncover key source material that captures the individuals' experiences and explains the multi-layered context of their life



Narrative Research Challenges

- Active collaboration with the participants is needed
- Researcher needs to reflect on how their own background shapes how they “restory”
- Questions of ownership of the story, who can tell the story, what version is convincing, and what happens when the narrative is complete must be addressed



Phenomenology: Definition and Background

- Describes the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals
- Describes what the participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon
- The purpose is to reduce the experiences of the participants with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence



Phenomenology: Definition and Background

- Researcher collects data from participants, develops a composite description of the essence of the experience that consists of “what” they experience and “how” they experienced it
- It has a philosophical foundation based on the writings of Husserl, Heidegger, Sart, and Merleau-Ponty



Types of Phenomenology: Hermeneutic (van Manen, 1990)

- Interpreting the “texts” of life
- Phenomenology research is a dynamic interplay among the research activities
 - Determine a phenomenon
 - Reflect on the essential themes that constitute the nature of the lived experience
 - Write a description of the phenomenon
 - Use the description to interpret the meanings of the experience



Types of Phenomenology:

Trancendental (Moustakas, 1994)

- Focuses on the description of the experiences of the participants
- Researchers engage in “epoche” in which they set aside their own experiences to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon they are studying (“bracketing”)
- Researchers reduce data to “significant statements” from which they construct themes and descriptions and then reduce them to an overall essence of the experience



Phenomenology Research Procedures: Moustakas (1994)

- Determine if the research problem is suited for a phenomenological approach
- Identify a phenomenon of interest
- Recognize and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology
- Collect the data from those who have experienced the phenomenon
 - Multiple interviews (5-25 persons)
 - Observations
 - Artifacts (e.g., art, poetry, music)



Phenomenology Research Procedures: Moustakas (1994)

- Ask participants two broad general questions:
 - *What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?*
 - *What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences about the phenomenon?*
- Identify *significant statements* (sentences or quotes) that provide an understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomenon
- Cluster *significant statements* into themes



The focus of a phenomenological study according to Patton (1990)

- lies in the "descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience." The goal is to identify essence of the shared experience that underlies all the variations in this particular learning experience. Essence is viewed as commonalties in the human experiences. According to Patton (1990), the steps include:
- Epoche: a phase in which the researcher eliminate, or clarify about preconception. Researchers need to be aware of "prejudices, viewpoints or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation" (Katz, 1987).
- Phenomenological reduction: the researcher brackets out the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form, uncontaminated by extraneous intrusions.



- Bracketing involves the following steps (Denzin, 1989):
 - Locate within the personal experience or self-story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question.
 - Interpret the meanings of these phrases, as an informed reader
 - Obtain the subject's interpretations of these phrases, if possible.
 - Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential recurring features of the phenomenon being studies
 - Offer a tentative statement, or definition, of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features identified.
- Textural portrayal of each theme: a description of an experience
- Development of structural synthesis: containing the bones of the experience: the true meanings of the experience of deeper meanings for the individual.



Phenomenology Research Procedures: Moustakas (1994)

- Write *Textual* and *Structural* descriptions using the significant statements and themes
 - *Textual Descriptions*: a description of what the participants' experienced
 - *Structural Descriptions*: a description of the context or setting that influenced how the participants experienced the phenomenon
- Write a composite description that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon using the *Textual* and *Structural* descriptions that focuses on the common experiences of the participants and the meaning of all of the experiences



Phenomenological Research Challenges

- Understanding the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology
- Choosing individuals for the study who have all experienced the phenomenon so that a common understanding can be forged
- *Bracketing* personal experiences – Researchers must decide how their personal experiences will be introduced into the study



Grounded Theory: Definition and Background

- The purpose of grounded theory is to develop a theory for an action or process that is “grounded” in the viewpoints of the participants.
- *Systematic grounded theory* originated in 1967 with Glanzer and Strauss as a contrast to the *a priori* theoretical orientations in sociology



Grounded Theory: Definition and Background

- Charmaz (2006) has advocated for a *constructivist* approach
- Clark (2006) argues that social *situations* should be the unit of analysis for grounded theory



Types of Grounded Theory Studies: The Systematic Approach

- The approach is systematic and is used to develop a theory that explains a process, action, or interaction.
- The participants are chosen by *theoretical sampling* to help the researchers form the best theories
- The data is collected mainly through 20-30 interviews during multiple visits to the field to saturate categories (happenings, events, documents)



Types of Grounded Theory Studies: The Systematic Approach

- The data analysis can alternate with data collection
- The data analysis consists of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding with a visual model developed during the axial coding phase
- The theory that is developed is articulated at the end of the study in a narrative statement, visual model, or a series of hypotheses or propositions



Types of Grounded Theory Studies: The Constructivist Approach

- The approach exists within the interpretive tradition with flexible guidelines
- The focus of the theory is based on the researcher's interpretation
- The focus in the approach is on learning about the experiences within hidden networks, situations, relationships, and making visible hidden hierarchies of power
- The emphasis in the approach is placed on views, values, beliefs, feelings, and ideologies of individuals



Types of Grounded Theory Studies: The Constructivist Approach

- The coding emphasizes the use of active codes such as gerund-based phrases (e.g., “recasting life”) (Charmaz, 2006)
- The role of the researcher is not minimized in the process
- The researcher brings personal values, experiences to the process as well as making decisions regarding priorities and questions to be asked of the data
- The conclusions are suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive



Grounded Theory Research Procedures: Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998)

- Determine if grounded theory is best suited for the research problem
- Focus research questions on understanding how individuals experience the process and identify the steps in the process



Grounded Theory Research Procedures: Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998)

- Conduct interviews with 20-30 participants
 - Questions focus on the steps in the process
 - Additional questions focus on what was central to the process, the causes of the phenomenon, the strategies employed during the process, and the effects or consequences that occurred
 - Data collection occurs until there is saturation



Grounded Theory Research Procedures: Strauss & Corbin (1990,1998)

- Data collection proceeds in stages
 - Open coding – researcher forms categories of information about the phenomenon by segmenting the information into dimensionalized categories
 - Axial coding – categories are assembled into a visual model in which the researcher identifies a central phenomenon (category that describes what the process is), causes, strategies, contexts, intervening conditions, and consequences (outcomes)
 - Selective coding – a *story line* that connects the categories



Grounded Theory Research Procedures: Strauss & Corbin (1990,1998)

- The researcher may develop a visual model that portrays the social, historical and economic conditions that influence the central phenomenon
- The theory that results is a substantive-level theory that addresses a specific problem or people



Challenges of Grounded Theory Research

- The researcher needs to set aside theoretical ideas or notions so that the substantive theory can emerge
- The researcher may have difficulty in determining when categories are saturated or when theory is sufficiently detailed



Challenges of Grounded Theory Research

- The researcher has little flexibility when using the Strauss and Corbin approach because there is little flexibility; the theory that is developed consists of prescribed categories
- The researcher will find that the Charmaz (2006) approach has more flexibility



Ethnography: Definition and Background

- *The purpose of ethnography is to describe and interpret the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group (Harris, 1968)*
- Agar (1980) notes that ethnography is both a process and an outcome of the research
- Ethnography involves extended observations of the group in which the researcher is immersed in their daily lives



Ethnography: Definition and Background

- Ethnography begin in the early 20th century in comparative anthropology
- Today subtypes of ethnography include structuralism and symbolic interactionism that have different theoretical orientations and aims



Types of Ethnographic Studies:

Realist Ethnography

- The approach is the traditional approach to ethnography
- The account of the situation is objective and written in the third person
- The ethnographer remains in the background and reports the facts
- The details of daily life often provided
- The ethnographer produces participant views through closely edited questions and has the final word on how culture will be interpreted



Types of Ethnographic Studies

Critical Ethnography

- The goal is the advocacy and the emancipation of marginalized groups
- The orientation in the study is value-laden
The status quo is challenged
- The concerns of power and control are addressed
- The issues of power, empowerment, inequality, dominance, repression, hegemony, and victimization are studied



Ethnography Research Procedures (Wolcott, 1999)

- Determine if ethnography is the appropriate research design for the problem
- Identify and locate a culture-sharing group to study
- Select cultural themes to study about the group (e.g., enculturation, socialization, learning, domination)
 - Begin by examining people in interaction in ordinary settings
 - *Culture* is inferred by the researcher by looking at what people do and say and the potential tensions between what they do and ought to do, and their artifacts



Ethnography Research Procedures (Wolcott, 1999)

- Determine the type of ethnography (realist or critical)
- Gather data where the group works and lives (*field work*)
 - Gather information where the group lives and works
 - Respect the individuals at the research site
 - Collect many sources of data
 - Analyze the data for a description of the group focusing on a single event and then moving into overall themes
- The final produce is a wholistic portrait of the group that incorporates both the views of the participants (emic) and the views of the researcher (etic)



Ethnography Challenges

- The researcher must be grounded in cultural anthropology and the meaning of a social-cultural system
- The researcher needs extensive time in the field to collect data
- The researcher must be aware that the audience for the work may be limited because of the narrative storytelling approach to writing that is often needed



Ethnography Challenges

- Extensive time in the field is needed to collect data
 - A grounding in anthropology is needed
 - The researcher must be aware of the danger of *going native*
 - The researcher must be culturally sensitive to the individuals being studied
- The researcher must be aware of his or her impact on the people and places studied



Case Study: Definition and Background

- A case study is the study of an issue through one or more cases in a setting or context (*a bounded system*)
- It is an object of study and a product of the inquiry
- One case or multiple cases over time can be studied



Case Study: Definition and Background

- Multiple sources of data are used that result from detailed in-depth data collection
- The report consists of description of the case and theme development about the case
- Case study research is interdisciplinary



Types of Case Studies

- Single instrumental case study - The researcher focuses on a single issue then selects a single case to illustrate the issue
- Collective or multiple instrumental case study – The researcher focuses on one issue but selects multiple cases to illustrate the issue that can be purposefully sampled from one site or several sites



Types of Case Studies

- Intrinsic case study – This approach focuses on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation (e.g., evaluating a program or one particular student who is having difficulty studying)



Case Study Research Procedures

- Determine if a case study is appropriate for the research problem
- Identify the case or cases to be studied
 - What kind of case study is most appropriate
 - What case or cases will be studied
 - Select cases that show different perspectives through maximal variation sampling
- Engage in multiple forms of data collection including interviews, observations, documents, audiovisual materials, participant-observations to develop an in-depth understanding of the case(s)



Case Study Research Procedures

- Develop a detailed description of the case(s) and common themes in the cases
 - When using multiple cases describe each case and themes first (*within-case analysis*)
 - Compare cases to look for common themes (*cross-case analysis*)
 - Look for common assertions and meanings within the case
- Report the *lessons learned* from the case regarding the issue of the case (instrumental) or learning about an unusual situation (intrinsic case)



Case Study Challenges

- Identifying cases to study
- Identifying whether a single case or multiple cases are needed
- Selecting an appropriate purposeful sampling strategy
- Having access to multiple sources of data
- Deciding how the boundaries of a case might be constrained by time, events, or processes



Differences Among the Five Approaches

- The types of research problems that are addressed
- The discipline origin (single vs. multiple)
- The data collection strategies
- The data analysis procedures
- The reporting approaches



Reporting Structures

<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Phenomenology</i>	<i>Grounded Theory</i>	<i>Ethnography</i>	<i>Case Study</i>
•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 assumption, 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(s) and its (their) context •Development of issues •Detail about selected issues •Assertions •Closing vignette (Adapted from Stake, 1995)

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