Qualitative Research Designs:
Selection and Implementation

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Counseling psychologists face many approaches from which to choose when they conduct a qualitative research study. This article focuses on the processes of selecting, contrasting, and implementing five different qualitative approaches. Based on an extended example related to test interpretation by counselors, clients, and communities, this article provides a detailed discussion about five qualitative approaches—narrative research; case study research; grounded theory; phenomenology; and participatory action research—as alternative qualitative procedures useful in understanding test interpretation. For each approach, the authors offer perspectives about historical origins, definition, variants, and the procedures of research.

The qualitative researcher today faces a baffling array of options for conducting qualitative research. Numerous inquiry strategies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), inquiry traditions (Creswell, 1998), qualitative approaches (Miller & Crabtree, 1992), and design types (Creswell, 2007) are available for selection. What criteria should govern whether researchers choose one approach over another? Although writers have discussed the variety of qualitative approaches for counseling psychologists (Haverkamp, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2005; Haverkamp & Young, 2007 [this issue]), there has been little in the field about the process of selecting an approach and few comparative analyses of the differences among approaches. Moreover, once counseling psychologists have chosen an approach, what procedures might they follow to develop a rigorous, systematic inquiry? Typically, qualitative discussions focus on paradigms, on theoretical overviews (e.g., Morrow & Smith, 2000), or on identity and moral agency (e.g., Hoshmand, 2005), and researchers are left without guidance as to how to proceed with an inquiry (cf. Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Poulin, in press [*TCP,* special issue, part 4]. To say, as Gadamer (1975) did in 1975, that methods are antithetical to the spirit of scholarship can no longer carry the day. Today, we find that federally

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funded organizations, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation, have issued reports on procedures that inquirers need to be aware of and follow when conducting qualitative research (e.g., NIH, 1999; Ragin, Nagel, & White, 2004). To this end, Creswell (2007) and Creswell and Maietta (2002) discussed and contrasted five popular types of qualitative designs, highlighting the procedures involved in actually conducting qualitative studies. This discussion extends the prior analysis but organizes the information to fit counseling psychologists' research needs.

We will discuss the process of selecting, contrasting, and implementing five qualitative designs: narrative research, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, and participatory action research (PAR). In counseling, the two most widely used qualitative designs appear to be case study and grounded theory, followed distantly by phenomenology. Counselor researchers have used these three designs to make important contributions to the field and to advance our knowledge and understanding in many relevant areas. For example, researchers have used these designs, in particular, to improve our understanding of the counseling process, of various issues related to diversity and multiculturalism, of counselor training and supervision, of individual identity development, and of the grieving process, to name a few. Two other qualitative designs, narrative research and PAR, hold considerable promise, we believe, to make additional contributions and advancements to the field. Narrative research relates closely to discourse in the therapeutic process, and PAR may contribute to counseling psychology's social-justice agenda. For each design, we provide a working definition, a list of variants, questions to consider when selecting a design, and specific steps for using each design in research.

To make the steps more concrete, we discuss all five designs within the context of an illustrative example, or scenario, based on using psychological tests in counseling and subsequently sharing the results with clients, referred to hereafter as test interpretation (TI). In addition to this illustration, we cite studies published in the counseling literature as referents and models for interested readers.

We leave to others detailed commentary on the paradigm and theoretical views (Morrow & Smith, 2000), the historical underpinnings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and the need to advocate for qualitative inquiry within counseling psychology (see Hoshmand, 1989). In our discussion, *research design* will refer to approaches to qualitative research that encompass formulating research questions and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting findings.

TYPES OF QUALITATIVE DESIGNS AND THEIR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The number of qualitative designs available to the researcher is extensive. Creswell (2007) has identified ten classifications of types drawn from

authors in education, nursing, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and the general social sciences. For example, the educational anthropologist Wolcott (1992) drew a tree diagram of 25 different types with the tree's trunk and branches representing different approaches based on data collection strategies. More recently, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) advanced a smaller set representing forms of ethnography, interpretive practices, case studies, grounded theory, life history and narratives, PAR, and clinical research in the social, behavioral, and clinical sciences. During the 1990s, specific books on types of qualitative designs encouraged this trend of focusing on a limited set of designs—for example, Strauss and Corbin (1990) on grounded theory, Stake (1995) on case study, and Moustakas (1994) on phenomenology. Our focus on five specific approaches applies current thinking of a parsimonious set of practices and relates directly to those most relevant to counseling psychology.

What criteria should govern the selection process of one approach over another? Researchers should begin their inquiry process with philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of their values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerges (methodology), and their writing structures (rhetorical; Creswell, 2003). Qualitative researchers use various interpretive paradigms to address these assumptions, such as positivist or postpositivist, constructivist, critical, and feminist-poststructural (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; also, Yeh & Inman, in press [*TCP,* special issue, part 4]). We agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2005) that qualitative writers may take stances within all these diverse interpretive paradigms. We would further urge counseling psychologists to make explicit their paradigm stances in designing, writing, and interpreting qualitative projects. More information about paradigms is available in the foundational article by Morrow (2007 [this issue]).

After selecting an interpretive paradigm, the researcher identifies a research question that informs the approach or design used in qualitative research to collect and analyze the data. The old adage that the methods should be based on the research questions is seldom explained for investigators, especially those new to qualitative research. An exception would be Morse and Field's (1995) useful framework from the health sciences. They advance the type of research questions that help to frame different types of qualitative designs in a study. A modification of their framework appears in Table 1. These questions are open ended, calling for views supplied by participants in a study; differ depending on design type; and span the scope of questions based on individual stories to collective views told by members of an entire community. The questions do not specify a relationship among variables (as found in experimental or correlational studies) and do not involve a treatment (found in single-subject studies and various experimental designs; e.g., Kahn, 2006 [*TCP* special issue, part 1]). Instead, the questions

TABLE 1: Types of Research Questions, Qualitative Designs, and Illustrative Test Interpretation (TI) Examples

Type of Research Question	*Qualitative Design*	*Illustration of Questions Within TI Context*
Chronological/story-oriented questions: Questions about the life experiences of an individual and how they unfold over time	Narrative research	What stories does a client tell us about the T1 process?
In-depth, descriptive questions: Questions about developing an in-depth understanding about how different cases provide insight into an issue or a unique case	Case study	How do four counselors share problem-focused or potentially "hard-to-hear" test results with clients?
Process questions: Questions about experiences over time or changes that have stages and phases	Grounded theory	What theory best explains the therapeutic effects of TI?
Essence questions: Questions about what is at the essence that all persons experience about a phenomenon	Phenomenology	What does *timing* mean to counselors who regularly share test results with clients?
Community action questions: Questions about how changes occur in a community	Participatory action research	How do community mental health centers better optimize their use of psychological tests in day-to-day practice?

SOURCE: Adapted from Morse and Field (1995, p. 25).
NOTE: TI = test interpretation.

focus on understanding a single concept, such as taking a psychological test, discussing the results, and incorporating it into new self-understandings and the ethical and appropriate use of tests.

Other factors inform the selection of a qualitative research design. Researchers select designs based on considerations such as the audiences' familiarity with one approach or another, the researchers' training and experiences with different forms of qualitative designs, and the researchers' and departments' partiality to one approach or the other. Also involved in the selection are researchers' comfort levels with structure, writing in a more literary or scientific way and the final written "product" that the design type produces. It is the final product, the data-collection strategies, and the procedures of data analysis that most distinguish the alternative inquiry designs (e.g., Suzuki,

Ahluwalia, Arora, & Mattis, 2007 [this issue]). An overview of the characteristics of each of the five designs, as shown in Table 2, permits a comparative analysis of the different approaches, as well as the elements of each design, that we will independently discuss in the following sections. In Table 2, we also cite examples of studies published in counseling psychology that use each of the five designs.

NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Background and Definition

Narrative research has many forms, uses various 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 individuals tell (Polkinghorne, 1995). We describe 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 studying one or two individuals, gathering data through collecting their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering 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). We find a postmodern, organizational orientation in Czarniawska (2004); a human developmental perspective from Daiute and Lightfoot (2004); psychological approaches from Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998); sociological approaches from Cortazzi (1993) and Riessman (1993); and quantitative (e.g., statistical stories in event-history modeling) and qualitative approaches in social research from Elliott (2005). The annual series *Narrative Study of Lives* that began in 1993 (e.g., Josselson & Lieblich, 1993) and the journal *Narrative Inquiry* have also encouraged interdisciplinary efforts at narrative research. With many recent books on narrative research, it is indeed a "field in the making" (Chase, 2005, p. 651). Thus, counseling psychologists need to select an approach to narrative research and consider carefully the procedures the author suggested. In our discussion, we rely on an accessible book written for social scientists called *Narrative Inquiry*, by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), which discusses "what narrative researchers do" (p. 48).

TABLE 2: Contrasting Characteristics of Five Qualitative Designs

Characteristics	*Narrative Research*	*Case Study*	*Grounded Theory*	*Phenomenology*	*Participatory Action Research*
Type of problem best suited for design	When detailed stories help understand the problem	When researcher has a case bounded by time or place that can inform a problem	When no theory exists or existing theories are inadequate	When the researcher seeks to understand the lived experiences of persons about a phenomenon	When a community issue needs to be addressed so that change can occur
Discipline background	Humanities	Psychology, law, political science, medicine	Sociology	Psychology, education	Philosophy, broadly in the social sciences
Unit of analysis	One or more individuals	An event, program, activity, or more than one individual	A process, action, or interaction involving many individuals	Several individuals who have shared the experience	An entire community
Data collection forms	Interviews, documents	Multiple forms: interviews, observations, documents, artifacts	Primarily interviews	Primarily interviews, although documents, observations, and art may also be considered	Depends on the community needs; can be both quantitative and qualitative
Data analysis strategies	Chronology, elements of a story, restorying	Description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes	Open coding, axial coding, selective coding	Bracketing, statements, meaning units or themes, textual description, structural description, essence of the phenomenon	Involve the community in decisions as to how to analyze the data

(continued)

TABLE 2: (continued)

Characteristics	*Narrative Research*	*Case Study*	*Grounded Theory*	*Phenomenology*	*Participatory Action Research*
Degree of structure in methods	Little set structure	Some structure	High level of structure depending on "camp"	Structured approach in data analysis	Little set structure
Examples of studies in counseling psychology	Hardy, Barkham, Field, Elliott, & Shapiro (1998); Winter & Daniluk (2004)	Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey (2005); Knox, Burkard, Johnson, Suzuki, & Ponterotto (2003)	Kinnier, Tribbensee, Rose, & Vaughan (2001); Morrow & Smith (1995); Rennie (1994)	Arminio (2001); Friedman, Smith, & Sledge (1997); Friedlander, & Blustein (2005); Mauzey & Erdman (1997); Muller & Thompson (2003)	Davidson, Stayner, Lambert, Smith, & Sledge (1997); Leff, Costigan, & Power (2004)

Variants

One approach to narrative research is to differentiate types of narrative research by the analytic strategies that authors use. Polkinghorne (1995) takes this approach and distinguishes between "analysis of narratives" (p. 12), using paradigmatic reasons to create descriptions of themes that hold across stories or taxonomies of story types, and "narrative analysis" in which researchers collect descriptions of events or happenings and then configure them into a story using a plotline. Polkinghorne (1995) goes on to emphasize the second form in his writings. More recently, Chase (2005) presents differing analytic lenses that researchers may use (e.g., enabled and constrained by social resources, socially situated interactive performances, narrators developing interpretations), but she also introduces the different forms of narrative to identify variants.

A second approach, then, is to emphasize the variety of forms found in narrative research practices (see, e.g., Casey, 1995/1996). A biography is a form of narrative study in which the researcher writes and records the experiences of another person's life. Autobiographies are written and recorded by the individuals who are the subject of the study (Ellis, 2004). Life histories portray an individual's entire life, while a personal-experience story is a narrative study of someone's personal experience found in single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore (Denzin, 1989). Narrative studies may have a specific contextual focus, such as teachers or children in classrooms (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000) or the stories told about organizations (Czarniawska, 2004). Narratives may have a guiding theoretical lens or perspective. This lens may be to advocate for Latin Americans using, for example, *testimonios* (Beverly, 2005), or to report the stories of women using a feminist lens (e.g., Personal Narratives Group, 1989) that conveys how women's voices are muted, multiple, and contradictory (Chase, 2005).

Procedures in Conducting Narrative Research

Using Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a procedural guide, the methods of conducting a TI study using narrative research might unfold in the following way. Assume that a deficiency in the literature is the individual perspectives of clients and their experiences in taking psychological tests during counseling. We would identify one or two individuals who have participated in testing during counseling. Collecting data from these individuals would involve having them tell their stories. These stories, called field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), provide the raw data for researchers. Other field texts might include a record of their stories in a journal or diary,

or the researcher might observe the individuals and record field notes. We might 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. Narrative researchers situate individual stories within the participants' personal experiences (their job, their homes) and their cultural (racial or ethnic) and historical (time and place) contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Next—and here is a unique feature of narrative research—we would analyze the clients' stories and "restory" them into a chronological presentation. We might shape the clients' stories into a chronology about, first, their introduction to testing by the counselor, followed by their actual test-taking experiences, and finally, by the interpretation process itself. Cortazzi (1993) suggests that this chronology of narrative research, with an emphasis on sequence, sets narrative apart from other genres of research. Restorying is the process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting them to place them within a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000). Different perspectives exist about the form of this restorying. It may follow Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative-inquiry space. Their approach involves writing about the personal and social (the interaction); the past, present, and future (continuity); and the place (situation). Other methods of restorying describe the individual's experiences (using the three-dimensional, inquiry-space approach) and then advance themes that arise from the restorying (see Huber & Whalen, 1999). The restory may 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 character; and a sequence with implied causality (i.e., a plot), during which the predicament is resolved in some fashion (Carter, 1993). In a more general sense, the story might include the elements typically found in novels, such as time, place, plot, and scene (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). 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.

During the research process, we would actively collaborate with the clients providing the stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As researchers collect stories, they negotiate relationships, smooth transitions, and provide ways to be useful to the participants. They negotiate the meaning of the stories with the participants, adding a validity check to the analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Hoyt, Warbasse, & Chu, 2006 [*TCP,* special issue, part 2]).

Within the participants' stories may also be an interwoven story of the researcher as she or he gains insight into herself or himself (see Huber & Whelan, 1999). In the end, our narrative analysis would tell the story of a client, unfolding in a chronology of experiences about psychological testing and the assessment and interpretation process. "Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told," said Clandinin and Connolly (2000, p. 20).

THE CASE STUDY

Background and Definition

Case study research may seem similar to narrative research, especially when the case chosen is a single individual, but significant distinctions exist. Many case studies focus on an issue with the case (individual, multiple individuals, program, or activity) selected to provide insight into the issue. Thus, the focus in case study research is not predominantly on the individual (and their stories) as in narrative research but on the issue with the individual case selected to understand the issue. Also, in case study research, the analytic approach involves a detailed description of the case, the setting of the case within contextual conditions (Yin, 2003), and a presentation that may or may not be chronological (Ponterotto & Grieger, in press [*TCP,* special issue, part 4]). Narrative research analysis, with its chronological restorying and story focus, relies on other analytic procedures. Case study research builds an in-depth, contextual understanding of the case, relying on multiple data sources (Yin, 2003) rather than on individual stories as in narrative research. As Yin (2003) stated, "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).

Thus, case study research studies an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting or a context). Although Stake (2005) himself stated 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 an inquiry strategy, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). We choose to view it as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, an object of study (Creswell, 2007), and 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.

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 the anthropologist Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islands, the French sociologist LePlay's study of families, and the case studies of the University of Chicago Department of Sociology in the 1920s and 1930s through the 1950s (e.g., Thomas & Znaniecki's, 1918-1920/1958, study of Polish peasants in Europe and American) as antecedents of qualitative case study research. Today, the case study writer has an array of texts and approaches from which to choose. Yin (2003), for example, espoused both quantitative and qualitative approaches to case study development and discussed explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive qualitative case studies. Merriam (1998) advocated a general approach to qualitative case studies in the education field. Stake (1995) systematically established procedures for case study research and cited them extensively in his example of "Harper School." In counseling psychology, Hill et al. (1997, 2005) employed consensual qualitative research, which involves a team approach to generating consensus about codes, core ideas, and domains for individual cases and across cases. Their approach has wide applicability in psychology in which teams engage in research and employ auditors to review the emerging case analysis at multiple stages in the research process.

Variants

Types of qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether it is one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity. Qualitative case studies may also be distinguished by 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 or multiple-case study, the researcher again selects one issue or concern but also selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select 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 design uses the logic of replication where the procedures are replicated 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 to include in the qualitative study. The final type of case study design is an intrinsic one 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 type resembles the focus of narrative research, but the case study analytic procedures of detailed description, set within the case's 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 multiple-case study.

Assume in a hypothetical TI study that we take a multiple case study approach. In this particular study, we want to explore counselors' approaches to discussing negative test results with their clients. This is an important issue because a number of popular tests, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–2 (MMPI-2), are problem focused, and counselors frequently share test results with clients that are difficult to hear and discuss openly and nondefensively. In this qualitative study, the cases to be analyzed are four counselors currently administering the MMPI-2 to clients. These cases are within a bounded system, a typical academic semester (time bounding) and a department-based training clinic (place bounding). We chose only four counselors to study because if we are to develop an in-depth understanding of each counselor about the issue under study, the more counselors we select, the less detail we can develop for each counselor. Because we have selected the four counselors, our form of case study will be a collective (multiple cases), instrumental (cases identified to help illuminate a problem) case study.

Our data collection will use the appropriate case study practices of multiple information sources (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) recommends six types of information: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. Following these recommendations, in the TI study, we may videotape the counselor-client interaction (most department clinics have this capability), interview the counselor and observe the counselor-client interaction using one-way mirrors, and record our field notes about the process. We may have the counselors write about their experiences with the clients in a journal and ask the counselors to share their progress notes and intake information about the clients, provided that the client gives permission to access their files.

The overall intent of this rigorous data collection is to develop an in-depth understanding of each counselor and the context in which he or she works.

Next, from all data sources, we analyze the data and write a detailed description of each counselor's approach to sharing negative, or potentially problematic, test results. This initial description might first describe each counselor and outline the major activities that occur over several client sessions, from the initial MMPI-2 administration to the test-feedback process. We would then focus, for example, on several specific situations that might have occurred, such as the point in the session when the feedback or test results changed from strengths focused to weakness focused. After this description ("relatively uncontested data"; Stake, 1995, p. 123), we might focus on a few key issues (or themes), not for generalizing beyond the case but to understand the complexity of the case. Our analytic strategy would be to identify issues within each case and then look for common themes that transcend the cases (Yin, 2003). Our description of one counselor, for example, may focus on the strategies used to report the negative test results (e.g., discussing within the context of client self-estimates) and on the themes that emerged from the analysis: concern for the self (counselor anxiety) or concern for the client (hurting the client's feelings). Another theme might be the perceived significance of the client's feedback, based on the level of severity of the problem area (e.g., informing a client that he or she meets criteria for a learning disability).

We end the case study with a broad interpretation of what we learned from studying the cases. The researcher interprets the meaning of the case, whether that meaning comes from learning about the issue of the case (instrumental case) or from learning about an unusual situation (intrinsic case). In the final interpretive phase, the researcher reports, as Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested, the lessons learned from the case. In the TI study, we would end the case analysis with applied generalizations about how counselors could provide negative feedback to clients. Given psychologists' general reluctance to break bad news, supervisors could use this information to help address training issues in department clinics.

GROUNDED THEORY

Background and Definition

Our TI multiple-case study provided an in-depth description and thematic analysis of four counselors. Although each counselor likely approached reporting negative results to clients differently, was there an underlying process common to all of them? If we were to select a larger number of counselors to study, we might develop a theory that explains processes that

they have in common, a valuable aid for practitioners in the field as well as for students in training. This theory would be "grounded," or derived from participant data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). 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 (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Two sociology researchers, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, originated this qualitative design in 1967. Later, they elaborated on their ideas in 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 Glaser and Strauss's initial collaboration, which produced such works as *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) and *Time for Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1968), the two authors have tended to disagree in perspectives. Glaser has criticized Strauss's approach to grounded theory as too prescribed and structured (Glaser, 1992). More recently, Charmaz (2005) has advocated a "constructivist" approach to grounded theory, thus introducing yet another perspective into the conversation about procedures. Grounded theory has gained popularity in sociology, nursing, education, psychology, and other social science fields.

Variants

In this section, we mention two approaches to grounded theory: the more systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the constructivist position of Charmaz (2005, 2006). In the more systematic, analytic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), the investigator focuses on a process, action, or interaction (e.g., the process of sharing therapeutic benefits of psychological test results with clients). We also find a specification of steps in coding data and in developing a visual model of the theory. Researchers begin with open coding, coding the data for major categories of information. From this coding, axial coding emerges in which the researcher identifies one or more of the open-coding categories (called the core phenomenon) and reexamines the data or collects new data to build a model around this core phenomenon. The model generated—often a visual model in the form of a figure or diagram—consists 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). In selective coding, the researcher then takes the model and develops propositions (or hypotheses) that interrelate the categories in the model or that assemble a story that describes the interrelationship of categories in the model. Strauss and Corbin (1998) take the model one step further. They suggest locating it within both macro- and micro-conditions and consequences. They advance the conditional/consequential matrix as a coding device to help the researcher make these connections. 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 world. In our experience, this matrix is seldom used in grounded-theory research (e.g., see Creswell & Brown, 1992), and researchers typically stop making connections among categories in their theoretical models at substantive, low-level theorizing rather than at the abstract level. Although making connections between the substantive theory and its larger implications for the community, nation, and world are 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 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 Charmaz's (2005, 2006) constructivist writing. Instead of embracing the study of a single process or core category as in the Strauss and Corbin (1998) approach, Charmaz assumes diverse local worlds and multiple realities and aims to show the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions. Constructivist grounded theory, according to Charmaz (2006), lies squarely in the interpretive tradition of qualitative research with flexible guidelines, a focus on theory 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 individuals' views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies than on research methods, 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, or conceptual maps 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, a grounded-theory procedure does not minimize the researcher's role in the process. The researcher makes decisions about the categories throughout the process and brings questions to the data and personal values, experiences, and priorities. Any conclusions that grounded theorists develop are, according to Charmaz (2000), suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive.

Procedures in Conducting a Grounded-Theory Study

Although Charmaz's interpretive approach has many attractive elements that now constitute good qualitative research (e.g., reflexivity, being flexible in structure), we will rely on Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) for our illustration of grounded-theory procedures because their systematic procedures seem to best fit the rigorous methods adopted by counseling psychologists.

As counseling psychologists, we would use grounded theory to develop a theory of what makes TIs effective in counseling practice. This type of study is important because, according to Martin, Prupas, and Sugarman (1999), "the failure of TI to achieve widespread recognition as a process of therapeutic change, as envisioned by Goldman and others, is due to an absence of convincing theory" (p. 133). We would identify counselors who were using the 16PF with clients in several different counseling clinics and would focus specifically on the process of using and interpreting test results to generate a theoretical model that explains how the process works for clients and what makes it efficacious and effective.

We would collect data in one-on-one interviews from 20 clients who have taken the 16PF, individuals who have directly experienced the action, interaction, or process. Our choice of 20 clients is not based on any correct number but rather on the idea that our theory needs to be well detailed and saturated at a point where any new information gathered would not further develop our model. We may arrive at this point at 18, 22, or 25 people, so our choice of 20 is a point of departure rather than a firm number. These clients do not have to be in the same clinic, but they do need to have taken the 16PF and to have received feedback from their counselors about the results. We would ask them, "Could you describe the process of taking the 16PF and receiving feedback from your counselor?"

From this initial question, our data analysis would form categories of information (a grouping of the statements into broad ideas, called open coding; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this process, we would be mindful of identifying a core phenomenon—an idea that seems to be central to the TI process. We might, for example, form a category related to increased level of involvement in counseling, a recognized "common factor" of positive therapeutic outcomes. Although other categories might emerge (e.g., increased emotional arousal and increased counselor credibility or social influence), we will focus on level of involvement as the core phenomenon.

At this point, we move to more advanced categorization and relating of the data, called axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We collect more interviews or reexamine our initial interviews with the focus on client involvement. We ask of this data, How does the process, increased level of involvement, occur? What

does it mean? What influences its development? What was the context of the counseling session in which it occurred? What strategies did the counselor use to encourage it? and What were the consequences for the client? In so doing, we are asking several structured questions (e.g., What is it? What caused it? What strategies were used?) to better understand the unfolding of the process.

As the process starts to become clearer, we begin to interrelate categories (e.g., causes and strategies) around the core phenomenon (i.e., level of involvement). We draw a logic paradigm, a visual model, that helps to portray the process (Morrow & Smith, 1995). We might also form a narrative that discusses the linkages of the categories in the process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), or we might advance hypotheses or propositions (Creswell & Brown, 1992) that specify the relationships. For example, we might form this hypothesis: "When clients take psychological tests in counseling, and when they participate actively in the TI process, they become more involved in counseling and more invested in or committed to the change process." In this way, we end with a theoretical model that explains the process, a visual figure of the model, and a discussion that interrelates categories in the model. The model itself can be informative for counseling psychologists who seek an underlining understanding of the TI process or for researchers interested in studying the circumstances in which the model works best.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Background and Definition

In both phenomenology and grounded theory we collect the views of a number of participants. However, instead of theorizing from these views and generating a theoretical model, phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., grief, anger). In this way, phenomenologists work much more from the participants' specific statements and experiences rather than abstracting from their statements to construct a model from the researcher's interpretations as in grounded theory.

The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of persons 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, exclusion, anger, 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 the individuals—what

they experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology has a strong philosophical component to it, in addition to these procedures. It draws heavily on the writings of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and of 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 was raising the question, "What is phenomenology?" In fact, Husserl was known to call any project currently under way "phenomenology" (Natanson, 1973).

Writers following in Husserl's footsteps also seem to point to different philosophical arguments for using phenomenology today (contrast, for example, the philosophical basis in Moutakas [1994], Stewart & Mickunas [1990], and van Manen [1990]). Across all these perspectives, however, the philosophical assumptions rest on studying people's experiences as they are lived every day, viewing these experiences as conscious (van Manen, 1990), and arriving at a description of the essence of these experiences, not explanations or analyses (Moustakas, 1994).

Variants

We highlight two approaches to phenomenology 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). The educator van Manen wrote an instructive book on hermeneutical phenomenology in which he described research as oriented to lived experience (phenomenology) and as interpreting the "texts" of life (hermeneutic; p. 4). Although van Manen does not believe that his approach is a set of rules or methods for conducting research, he discusses a phenomenological research study 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 also 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 less focused on the researcher's interpretation than is the hermeneutic phenomenology approach and more on describing experiences as well as another one of Husserl's concepts, epoche, in which the investigator sets aside as much as possible his or her experiences to take a fresh perspective of 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, we see researchers aim toward this objective when they begin a project describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others (Creswell, 2007).

Besides bracketing, the empirical, transcendental phenomenology draws on the *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology* (e.g., Giorgi, 1985) and on 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, combines the statements into themes, and writes a textual description of the experiences of the persons, a structural description of their experiences (the conditions, situations, or context in which they experienced the phenomenon), and a combined statement of textural and structural descriptions to convey the essence of the experience.

The Process of Conducting Phenomenology

In keeping with our TI scenario, we use Moustakas's (1994) approach because it has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions. Assume that in this instance, we are interested in describing the experiences of counselors and the optimal timing and use of tests in counseling. The phenomenon of interest would be "timing," and we would need to identify several counselors to participate in interviews about this phenomenon. To set our own experiences aside, we would describe these experiences with clients and what we believe is the best, most appropriate time to introduce and use psychological tests with clients. This personal description may be added into the overall essence description at the end, or it may be advanced at the beginning of the research study. Next, we would select participants for the study. Polkinghorne (1989) recommends that we interview 5 to 25 individuals to develop the possibilities of experiences. Assume that we decide to interview 10 counselors, although other forms, such as taped conversations, formally written responses, and accounts of vicarious experiences of drama, films, poetry, or novels, have been mentioned (van Manen, 1990).

We ask these counselors to reflect on two questions: When you consider

administering a test to a client, what have you experienced in terms of the timing of the testing? and What contexts or situations typically influence and/or affect the timing? The first question allows us to build a textual description, and the second, a structural description. In the first data analysis, we would go through the transcripts from the 10 interviews and begin highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of the overall timing experience. Next, we would array these statements on paper and collapse them into meaning units or broader themes. We might then go back through the transcripts and look at these themes more closely and identify situations or contexts in which the themes appeared. For example, a counselor might talk about his or her experiences in administering a test after establishing sufficient rapport with the client and fully identifying the problems or issues (a textual description). The counselor might go on to describe a situation for optimal test use after three to four sessions with the client and how the counselor elected to introduce and use the test at that time (structural description).

Finally, we need to describe the essence of the timing experience. We would write a passage at the end of our study that is a long paragraph about the essence of the experience for the counselors. In this description, we would report the varied experiences of the counselors and the different contexts in which they experienced the timing for administering a test. This would end the study, although we might then reflect on how past literature, theories, or practices are similar to or different from the essence we have described. In the end, our phenomenology presents a description of the experiences of the individuals studied and their common experiences with the phenomenon. The reader of our report should come away with the feeling that "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 46).

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Background and Definition

The designs presented thus far do not involve an overt call for change unless the researcher incorporates an advocacy stance into the research. In PAR, a major feature is to produce social change (Maguire, 1987) and improve the quality of life (Stringer, 1999) in oppressed and exploited communities. This form of research is unique in the sense that the researcher and the members of the community are engaged at all levels of the research process (Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes, 1991).

PAR has been defined in different ways by many researchers from vari-

ous fields. PAR has been described as a "radical type of activist research" (Cancian, 1996, p. 188); "a process of research, education, and action" (Hall, 1981, p. 6); "an ongoing organizational learning process" (Whyte et al., 1991, p. 20); "a dynamic process" (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p. 187); "community-based" inquiry (Stringer, 1999, p. 9); and "critical" action research (Mills, 2000, p. 7). Feminist researchers point out that PAR and feminism share a mutual commitment for social justice and equality. Maguire (1996) argues that although PAR and feminism share "emancipatory and transformative intentions" (p. 28), PAR has failed to include the role gender plays in the oppression of women. Based on these perspectives, we may define PAR as a qualitative research inquiry in which the researcher and the participants collaborate at all levels in the research process (participation) to help find a suitable solution for a social problem that significantly affects an underserved community (action).

PAR was influenced by the work of Paulo Freire (1970), who argued for a liberal ideology for the oppressed and exploited. Freire believed that the researcher and the participant are equal and active participants in the research process. Participatory action researchers also attribute the development of PAR to societal changes where researchers from industrialized countries confronted conventional projects to empower poorer rural and urban communities (Freire, 1970; Tandon, 1988). Brydon-Miller (2001) indicated that PAR has been conducted all over the world, especially in third-world countries. In the United States, we may trace PAR back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the establishment of different research centers and organizations that conducted this type of research (see Brydon-Miller, 2001). PAR in psychology is not necessarily a new development. Kidd and Kral (2005), for example, highlight how methods (e.g., collaboration of organizations) used in the area of community psychology are similar to those used in PAR.

Variants

Although there are various types of PAR (see Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), this section will present some of the most commonly used forms of PAR. The first is called participatory research. In this type of research methodology, the researcher and the community share ownership of the research, the analysis of social problems is community based, and the purpose of the research is to produce community action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) provided seven key features of PAR. These key features are that PAR is a social process in which the researcher deliberately explores the relationship between the individual and the other

people. The object is to understand how individual relationships are formed and reformed through social interaction. PAR is participatory, meaning that people are engaged in examining their understandings, skills and values, and interpretation of their world and how these frame and constrain their actions. This form of research is both practical and collaborative. It is practical because researchers usually explore acts of communication, the production of knowledge, and the structure of social organization with the intent to reduce irrational, unproductive, unjust, or unsatisfying interactions. It is collaborative because it is completed with others. PAR is emancipatory in that it helps individuals to "recover, and release themselves, from the constraints or irrational, unproductive, unjust, and unsatisfying *social structures* that limit their self-development and self determination" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 597). This form of research is also critical in that it attempts to help individuals and liberate them from constraints covered in the media, language, work, and relationships of power. PAR is recursive (reflexive and dialectical) and focused on bringing about change in practices. Finally, this form of inquiry aims to transform both theory and practice by finding a mutual relationship between the two and establishing how this relationship may help to shape the life and work of a particular setting.

PAR is also called action research, which, according to Mills (2000), is a type of inquiry that aims to improve the lives of individuals by studying the issues or problems they face. Thus, the intention of action research is to produce change and solve social problems. Feminist participatory research is another variant of PAR. According to Maguire (1996), this unique type of methodology allows researchers to analyze more closely how "organizational structures, processes, and practices shape and influence how people of unequal power and privilege are in relationship with each other" (p. 35).

The Process of Conducting a PAR Study

Although PAR has been widely used around the world, clear, well-established procedures for conducting this form of inquiry do not exist. Instead, there are various ways to conduct research using PAR designs (see Fernandes & Tandon, 1981; Maguire, 1987; Stringer, 1999). An overview of several general approaches follows using the TI illustration. In the TI study, let us assume that a need exists to better optimize the ethical and appropriate use of psychological tests in a community. We know from the literature that only about one third of clients receive feedback about their test results consistently (Curry & Hanson, 2005). PAR is a good choice for design if there is a need to bring about change in a community.

A request to conduct a study might come from the psychologists and

master's-level clinicians located in community-based mental health centers and private clinics in a community of 200,000. This request might originate with members of the community who ask the researchers to assist them in the inquiry or from a researcher(s) who is an active member of the community. It is important at the early stages of the research process for us, as investigators, and for the community to create a mutually respectful and collaborative relationship. For a PAR project to succeed, there must be trust and commitment by everyone involved in the project (Brydon-Miller, 2001).

Next, we collaborate with community members to introduce the TI project at a local or state professional association meeting or conference or at a regional workshop that community mental health practitioners attend. In this stage, we dialogue with community members for the purpose of identifying and defining community problems (Maguire, 1987). It is also a time to develop research questions to be investigated (Stringer, 1999). At this meeting, a dialogue can occur about the resources needed to address the problem of using tests ethically and consistently among the mental health professionals. From this dialogue, we can form a plan of action for the research. Stringer (1999) states during this phase, literature and existing data may help develop a plan of action. One aspect of this plan may involve the formation of a collaborative researcher or community member task force that will help us design the data collection and assess the current use of tests.

Assume that our task force decides to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. In the quantitative phase, we decide to conduct a survey of practitioners and design a brief three-page instrument asking questions such as the types of tests given, types of client populations and presenting problems, frequency of test feedback to clients, and perceived benefits of testing (for an extensive discussion of quantitative methods and practices, see *TCP* special issue, parts 1 & 2 [2006]). We also decide to collect qualitative data in the form of semistructured interviews with 10 to 15 practitioners. Our questions represent the same categories we used on the survey and help us probe in more detail the actual day-to-day practices. Typically, PAR studies involve only qualitative data; however, Camardese and Youngman (1996) collected both qualitative and quantitative survey data among homeless and mentally ill individuals. During this stage, it is imperative that we do not limit the time for the data collection. Participants may not have the time to participate in interviews or may not have the necessary knowledge to fill out surveys. Stringer (1999) suggests that during this phase, an accurate record be kept of all the information collected.

We will involve community members in the data analysis (i.e., statistical analysis for the surveys and thematic analysis for the qualitative interviews). Stringer (1999) suggests that the researchers themselves may opt to analyze the data or to train others to assist in the data analysis. Results from

this analysis will lead to our action plan, formally written or generally outlined (Stringer, 1999), which will focus on raising awareness in the mental health field and on shaping recommendations for policy changes. Each mental health center would likely develop its own policies and best practices for using tests in its clinical work. The findings from the survey and the interviews would be condensed into a brief set of 10 recommendations for the community and distributed to all mental health providers. The task force would be seen as an ongoing group that would meet every year to assess the implementation of the recommendations.

DISCUSSION

The application of the designs to the various TI studies shows how a single research problem may be applied and understood from different qualitative perspectives (e.g., client, counselor, and community). From these sketches of designs, we may identify fundamental differences among these types of qualitative research. At a most fundamental level, the five differ in what each is trying to accomplish and in the "product" that the qualitative researcher has at the end of the study. A detailed picture of an individual's stories forms the basis of a narrative study; an in-depth study of a bounded system or a case (or several cases) becomes a case study; a theory, often portrayed in a visual model, emerges in grounded theory; a description of common experiences of persons about a phenomenon results in phenomenology; and a community action plan develops from PAR. The unit of analysis of the qualitative inquiry also differs from the smallest unit (an individual in a narrative study) to the largest unit (an entire community in PAR). Also, the approaches vary in terms of the level of structure involved in the methods, from highly unstructured approaches in narrative research and PAR to more highly structured approaches in grounded theory and phenomenology. Although some overlaps exist in discipline origin, the origin of some designs have a limited discipline base (e.g., grounded theory from sociology and phenomenology from psychology), while others have a much broader disciplinary base (e.g., narrative, case study, and PAR). Data-collection processes vary from an emphasis on specific forms (e.g., more interviews in grounded theory) to an emphasis on a wide range of forms (e.g., multiple types of data collected in case study research to provide the in-depth case picture).

It is important for counseling psychologists to state their particular type of qualitative design when presenting to their graduate committees, journal editors, and funding agencies. Likewise, once a researcher chooses a design, using specific practices advanced in books and in articles like this one will

help to ensure scholarly qualitative research. Although we have addressed only five types of qualitative designs, each may be found in the counseling literature and, if used appropriately and intentionally, may extend considerably the methodological toolbox of interested counseling researchers in the field.

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