

For specific procedures within the traditions of inquiry, I recommend books by Denzin (1989a), Fetterman (1989), Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Moustakas (1994), Stake (1995), Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Thomas (1993).

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

Fetterman, D. M. (1989). *Ethnography: Step by step*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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

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

Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing critical ethnography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

EXERCISES

1. Identify one of the eight procedures for verification mentioned in this chapter and use it in your study. Also, indicate whether your study changed as a result of its use or remained the same.
2. For the tradition you used or are planning to use, identify the criteria for assessing the quality of the study and present an argument for each criterion as to how the study meets or will meet each criterion.



"Turning the Story" and Conclusion

▼ In this book, I suggest that researchers be cognizant of the procedures of qualitative research and of the differences in traditions of qualitative inquiry. This is not to suggest a preoccupation with method or methodology; indeed, I see two parallel tracks in a study: the substantive content of the study and the methodology. With increased interest in qualitative research, it is important that studies being conducted go forward with rigor and attention to the procedures developed within traditions of inquiry.

The traditions are many, and their procedures for research are well documented within books and articles. A few writers classify the

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I am indebted to Harry Wolcott for never quite being able to communicate what the scenario for an ethnography was supposed to look like but always making me think I was right on the verge of getting it (H. F. Wolcott, personal communication, October 10, 1996).

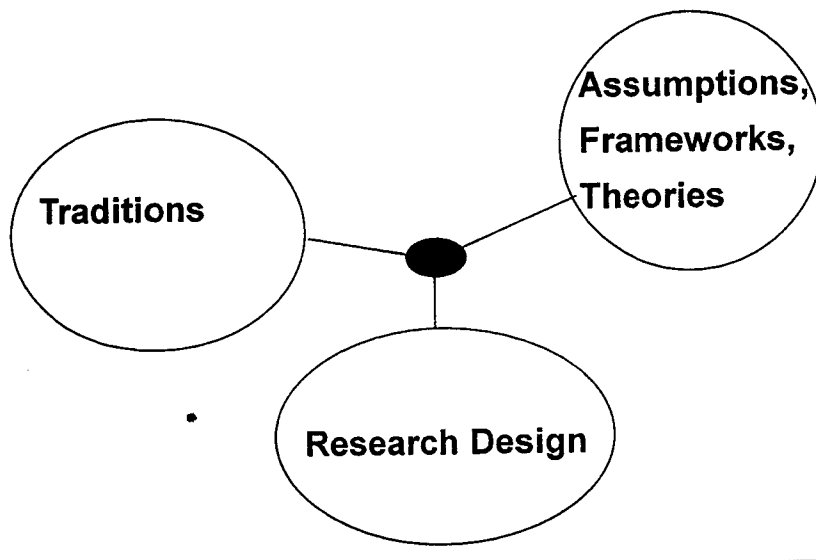


Figure 11.1 Visual Image of Conducting Qualitative Research

traditions, and some authors mention their favorites. Unquestionably, qualitative research cannot be characterized as of one type, attested to by the multivocal discourse surrounding qualitative research today. Adding to this discourse are perspectives about philosophical, theoretical, and ideological stances. To capture the essence of a good qualitative study, I visualize such a study as comprised of three interconnected circles. As shown in Figure 11.1, these circles include the tradition of inquiry, research design procedures, and philosophical and theoretical frameworks and assumptions. The interplay of these three factors contributes to a complex, rigorous study.

TURNING THE STORY

In this chapter, I again sharpen the distinctions among the traditions of inquiry, but I depart from my side-by-side approach used in prior chapters. I focus the lens in a new direction and “turn the story” of our gunman case (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995) into a biography, a phenomenology, a grounded theory, and an ethnography. Before con-

tinuing on with this chapter, the reader is advised to reexamine the gunman case study as presented in Appendix F and reviewed in Chapter 3.

Turning the story through different traditions of inquiry raises the issue of whether one *should* match a particular problem to a tradition of inquiry. Much emphasis is placed on this relationship in social and human science research. I agree this needs to be done. But for purposes of this book, my way around this issue is to pose a *general* problem—“How did the campus react?”—and then construct scenarios for *specific* problems. For instance, the specific problem of studying a single individual’s reaction to the gun incident is different from the specific problem of how the students reacted, but both scenarios are reactions to the *general* issue of campus reaction to the incident. The general problem that I address is that we know little about how campuses respond to violence and even less about how different constituent groups on campus respond to a potentially violent incident. This was the central problem in our gunman case study (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995), and I briefly review the major dimensions of this study.

A CASE STUDY

This qualitative case study (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995) presents a campus reaction to a gunman incident in which a student attempted to fire a gun at his classmates. We titled this study “Campus Response to a Student Gunman,” and we composed this case study with the “substantive case report” format of Lincoln and Guba (1985) in mind. This format calls for an explication of the problem, a thorough description of the context or setting and the processes observed, a discussion of important elements, and, finally, “lessons to be learned” (p. 362). After introducing the case study with the problem of violence on college campuses, this study provides a detailed description of the setting and a chronology of events immediately following the incident and events during the following 2 weeks. Then we turn to important themes to emerge in this analysis—themes of denial, fear, safety, retriggering, and campus planning. We construct a “layering of themes” building from the specific to the more general. These themes merge into two overarching themes: an organizational theme and a

psychological or social-psychological theme. We gathered data through interviews with informants, observations, documents, and audio-visual materials. From the case emerges a proposed plan for campuses, and the case ends with an implied lesson for the specific midwestern campus and a specific set of questions this campus or other campuses might use to design a plan for handling future campus terrorist incidents.

Turning to specific research questions in this case, we asked the following. What happened? Who was involved in response to the incident? What themes of response emerged during an 8-month period? What theoretical constructs helped us understand the campus response and what constructs developed that were unique to this case? We entered the field 2 days after the incident and did not use any a priori theoretical lens to guide our questions or the results. The narrative first described the incident, analyzed it through levels of abstraction, and provided some interpretation by relating the context to larger theoretical frameworks. We verified our case by using multiple data sources for the themes and by checking the final account with select informants or "member checking."

A BIOGRAPHY

How might I approach this same general problem as an interpretive biographical study? Rather than identify responses from multiple campus constituents, I focus on one individual such as the instructor of the class involved in the incident. I sketch the working title, "Confrontation of Brothers: An Interpretive Biography of an Afro-American Professor." This instructor, like the gunman, is Afro-American, and his response to such an incident is situated within racial and cultural contexts. Hence, as an interpretive biographer, I might ask the following research question: What are the life experiences for the instructor of the class, and how do these experiences form and shape his reaction to the incident? This biographical approach relies on studying a single individual and situating this individual within his historic background. I would examine life events or "epiphanies" culled from stories he tells me. As a theoretical perspective, I might bring to the study the issues of race, discrimination, and marginality and how these issues play out both within the Afro-American culture

and between Black and other cultures. These perspectives may shape how the instructor views the student gunman in the class. I also might compose this report by discussing my own situated beliefs followed by those of the instructor and the changes he brings about as a result of his experiences. For instance, did he continue teaching? Did he talk with the class about his feelings? For verification, my biography of this instructor would contain a detailed description of the context to reveal the historical and interactional features of the experience (Denzin, 1989b). I also would acknowledge that any interpretation of the instructor's reaction would be incomplete, unfinished, and a rendering from my own perspective as a non-Afro-American.

A PHENOMENOLOGY

Rather than study a single individual as in a biography, I would study several individual students and examine a psychological concept in the tradition of psychological phenomenology. My working title might be "The Meaning of Fear for Students Caught in a Near Tragedy on Campus." Assume that this concept is the "fear" of the students expressed during the incident, immediately after it, and several weeks later. I might pose the following questions. What fear did the students experience, and how did they experience it? What meanings did they ascribe to this experience? As a phenomenologist, I assume that human experience makes sense to those who live it and that human experience can be consciously expressed (Dukes, 1984). Thus, I bring a concept to explore (fear) and a philosophical orientation (I want to study the meaning of the students' experiences). I engage in extensive interviews with up to 10 students, and I analyze the interviews using the steps described by Moustakas (1994) and illustrated in the phenomenological study by Riemen (1986). I begin with an explication of my own fears and my experience of it. Then I read through all of the students' statements and locate significant statements about their meanings of fear. I would interpret the meanings of their statements and cluster these meanings into themes. My final step is to write a long paragraph providing a narrative description of what they experienced and how they experienced it to develop the "essential structure" of their experiences. Throughout the interviews, I "bracket" my own views about fear and rely on statements supplied by the students. As

a phenomenologist, I would be most interested in the meanings of the experiences for myself first and then turn outward and establish the "intersubjective validity," testing this understanding with other individuals (Moustakas, 1994).

A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

If a theory needs to be developed (or modified) to explain the campus reaction to this incident, then I would use grounded theory. For example, I might develop a theory around the "surreal" experiences of several students immediately following the incident, experiences resulting in actions and reactions by students. The draft title of my study might be "A Theory of Surreal Experiences for Students in a Campus Incident," as indicated by the following example:

In the debriefing by counselors, one female student commented, "I thought the gunman would shoot out a little flag that would say 'bang.'" For her, the event was like a dream.

My research questions might be as follows: What theory explains the phenomenon of the "surreal" experiences of the students immediately following the incident? What were these experiences? What caused them? What strategies did they use to cope with them? What were the consequences of their strategies? What specific interaction issues and larger conditions influenced their strategies? Consistent with grounded theory, I would not bring into the data collection and analysis a specific theoretical orientation other than to see how the students interact and respond to the incident. The narrative format would be to first identify categories of these experiences and present them as open coding, and then to pose a visual picture of a theory composed of causal conditions, intervening and context factors, and specific strategies and consequences (axial coding). I would advance theoretical propositions or hypotheses that explain surreal experiences of the students (selective coding). I would verify my account by judging the thoroughness of the research process and whether the findings are empirically grounded. Corbin and Strauss (1990) provide specific questions that I use related to these two dimensions.

AN ETHNOGRAPHY

In grounded theory, my focus is on generating a theory grounded in the data. In ethnography, I turn the focus instead to a set of incidents as a critical event that offers an opportunity to see "culture at work." To keep the study manageable, I might begin by looking at how the event, although itself unpredictable, triggered quite predictable responses among members of the campus community. These community members responded according to their roles, and thus I could look at some recognized campus microcultures. Students constitute one such microculture, and they, in turn, comprise a number of further microcultures or subcultures. Because the students in this class were together for 16 weeks during the semester, they had enough time to develop some shared patterns of behavior and might be presumed to have become a more cohesive group after the incident, and so they might tentatively be identified as a microculture. Maybe that is getting too finely detailed. Suppose I decide instead to look at the entire campus community in my ethnographic study.

The title of the study might be "Getting Back to Normal: An Ethnography of a Campus Response to a Gunman Incident," and I ask the following questions: How did this incident produce predictable role performance within affected groups? Using the entire campus as a cultural system or culture-sharing group, in what roles did the individuals and groups participate? One possibility would be that they want to get the campus back to normal after the incident by engaging in predictable patterns of behavior. Although no one anticipates the exact moment or nature of the incident itself, its occurrence sets in motion rather predictable role performances throughout the campus community. Administrators do not close the campus and start running around warning, "The sky is falling." Campus police do not offer counseling sessions, whereas the Counseling Center does—but again, predictably, those sessions serve the student population, not police or groundskeepers who feel far more threatened. In short, predictable performances by campus constituencies follow in the wake of this incident.

Indeed, campus administrators routinely hold a news conference following the incident. Also, predictably, police carry out their investigation, and students ultimately and reluctantly contact their parents. The campus slowly returns to normal—an attempt to return to day-

to-day business, to steady state, or to homeostasis, as the systems thinkers say. In these predictable role behaviors, one sees culture at work.

As I enter the field, I explore cultural themes of the "organization of diversity" and "maintenance" activities of individuals and groups within the culture-sharing campus. Wallace (1970) defines the "organization of diversity" as "the actual diversity of habits, of motives, of personalities, of customs that do, in fact, coexist within the boundaries of any culturally organized society" (p. 23). My data collection consists of observations over time of predictable activities, behaviors, and roles in which people engage that help the campus return to normal. This data collection depends heavily on interviews. My ultimate narrative of the culture-sharing campus is in Wolcott's (1994b) three parts: a detailed description of the campus, an analysis of the cultural themes of "organizational diversity" and maintenance (possibly with taxonomies or comparisons [Spradley, 1979, 1980]), and my interpretation of the meaning of these themes for a campus response to the terrorist incident in light of systems thinking. Specific detail and my storytelling abilities enhance the narrative.

To end the study, I might use the "canoe into the sunset" approach or the more methodologically oriented ending of checking my account with informants. Here is the first approach:

The newsworthiness of the event will be long past before the ethnographic study is ready, but the event itself is of rather little consequence if the ethnographer's focus is on campus culture. Still, without such an event, the ethnographer working in his or her own society (and perhaps own campus as well) might have a difficult time "seeing" people performing in predictable everyday ways simply because that is the way in which we expect them to act. For the ethnographer working "at home," one has to find ways in which to make the familiar seem strange. An upsetting event can make ordinary role behavior easier to discern as people respond in predictable ways to unpredictable circumstances. Those predictable patterns are the stuff of culture.

Here is the verification ending:

Some of my "facts" or hypotheses may need (and be amenable to) checking or testing if I have carried my analysis in that direction. If I have tried to

be more interpretive, then perhaps I can "try out" the account on some of the people described, and the cautions and exceptions they express can be included in my final account to suggest that things are even more complex than the way I have presented them.

CONCLUSION

How have I answered my "compelling" question raised at the outset: How does the tradition of inquiry shape the design of a study? First, one of the most pronounced ways is in the focus of the study. As discussed in Chapter 3 and depicted in Figure 3.1, a theory differs from the exploration of a phenomenon or concept, from an in-depth case, and from the creation of an individual or group portrait. I find Figure 3.1 a useful orientating device for deciding which tradition I will use in a study.

However, this is not as clear-cut as it appears. A single case study of an individual can be approached either as a biography or as a case study. A cultural system may be explored as an ethnography, whereas a smaller "bounded" system, such as an event, a program, or an activity, may be studied as a case study. Both are systems, and the problem arises when one undertakes a microethnography, which might be approached either as a case study or as an ethnography. However, when one seeks to study cultural behavior, language, or artifacts, then the study of a system for me should be undertaken as an ethnography.

Second, a theoretical orientation plays a more central role in some traditions than in others. The extent to which one enters the field with a priori theories or a strong theoretical or philosophical lens varies, as discussed in Chapter 5. The "theory-before" traditions (H. F. Wolcott, personal communication, February 13, 1993) include ethnographies (i.e., cultural themes) and phenomenologies (i.e., Husserl's [1931] philosophical tenets), whereas the "theory-after" tradition is grounded theory. Case studies and biographies reside in the middle of a continuum of theory-before and theory-after, where examples of both extremes exist.

Third, the tradition shapes the language of the research design procedures in a study, especially terms used in the introduction to a study, the data collection, and the analysis phases of design. I incor-

porated these terms into Chapter 6 as I discussed procedures for designing the problem statement, the purpose statement, and the research questions and emphasized them in data collection and analysis. Writers encode their studies with terms specific to a tradition (Richardson, 1990). The glossary in Appendix A provides a useful list of terms within each tradition that researchers might incorporate into the language of their studies.

Fourth, the tradition influences *what* and *who* is studied, as discussed in Chapter 7. A study may consist of a single individual (i.e., biography), groups of people (i.e., phenomenology, grounded theory), or a culture (i.e., ethnography). A case study might fit into all three of these categories as one explores a single individual, an event, or a large social setting. Also in Chapter 7, I highlighted how the traditions vary in the extent of data collection, from primarily unidimensional approaches (i.e., biographies = interviews; grounded theory = interviews; phenomenology = interviews) to multidimensional approaches (i.e., ethnographies = observations, interviews, and documents; case studies = interviews, observations, documents, archival material, and video). Although these forms of data collection are not fixed, I see a general pattern that differentiates the traditions.

Fifth, the distinctions among the traditions are most pronounced in the data analysis phase, as discussed in Chapter 8. Data analysis ranges from unstructured to structured approaches. Among the more unstructured approaches, I include ethnographies (with the exception of Spradley, 1979, 1980) and biographies (especially those interpretive forms advanced by Denzin, 1989b). The more structured approaches consist of grounded theory with a systematic procedure and phenomenology (see Colazzi's [1978] approach and those of Dukes, 1984, and Moustakas, 1994) and case studies (Stake, 1995). These procedures provide direction for narrative approaches. Also, the traditions shape the amount of relative weight given to description in the analysis of the data. In ethnographies, case studies, and biographies, researchers employ substantial description; in phenomenologies, investigators use less description; and grounded theorists seem not to use it at all, choosing to move directly into analysis of the data.

Sixth, the tradition shapes the final written product as well as the embedded rhetorical structures used in the narrative. This explains why qualitative studies look so different and are composed so differently, as discussed in Chapter 9. Take, for example, the presence of the

researcher. The presence of the researcher is found little in the more "objective" accounts provided in grounded theory. Alternatively, the researcher is center stage in ethnographies and possibly in case studies where "interpretation" plays a major role.

Seventh, the criteria for assessing the quality of a study differ among the traditions, as discussed in Chapter 10. Although some overlap exists in the procedures for verification, the criteria for assessing the worth of a study are available for each tradition.

In summary, when designing a qualitative study, I recommend that the author design the study within one of the traditions of qualitative inquiry. This means that components of the design process (e.g., theoretical framework, research purpose and questions, data collection, data analysis, report writing, verification) will reflect the procedures of the tradition and be composed with the encoding and composing features of that tradition. This is not to rigidly suggest that one cannot mix traditions and employ, for example, a grounded theory analysis procedure within a case study design. "Purity" is not my aim. But in this book, I suggested that the reader sort out the traditions first before combining them and see each one as a rigorous procedure in its own right. As I contrasted the five traditions, I found distinctions as well as overlap among them, but approaching a study attuned to procedures found within the tradition will enhance the sophistication of the project and convey a level of expertise of the researcher needed within qualitative inquiry.

EXERCISES

1. Take the qualitative study you have completed and turn the story into one of the other traditions of qualitative inquiry.
2. In this chapter, I presented the study of campus response to a gunman incident in five ways. Take each scenario and label the parts using the language of each tradition and the terms found in the glossary in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A



An Annotated Glossary of Terms

▼ The definitions in this glossary represent key terms as they are used and defined in this book. Many definitions exist for these terms, but the most workable definitions for me (and hopefully the reader) are those that reflect the content and references presented in this book. I group the terms by tradition of inquiry and alphabetize them within the tradition, and at the end of the glossary I define additional terms that do not conveniently relate to any specific tradition.

▼ BIOGRAPHY ▼

autobiography This form of biographical writing is the narrative account of a person's life that he or she has personally written or otherwise recorded (Angrosino, 1989a).

biographical study This is the study of a single individual and his or her experiences as told to the researcher or as found in documents

and archival materials (Denzin, 1989a). I use the term to connote the broad genre of biographical writings that includes individual biographies, autobiographies, life histories, and oral histories.

chronology This is a common approach for undertaking a biographical form of writing in which the author presents the life in stages or steps according to the age of the individual (Denzin, 1989a).

classical biography This form of biography reflects the author's use of a theoretical orientation, formal hypotheses or questions, and validity, reliability, and generalizability issues in a scientific tradition. It is called the "classical" approach by Denzin (1989a).

epiphanies These are special events in an individual's life that represent turning points. They vary in their impact from minor epiphanies to major epiphanies, and they may be positive or negative in their impact (Denzin, 1989a).

historical context This is the context in which the researcher presents the life of the subject. The context may be the subject's family, the subject's society, or the history, social, or political trends of the subject's times (Denzin, 1989a).

interpretive biography This form of a biography is based on the author being present in the study and open recognition that biographical writing is, in part, autobiographical of the author. Thus, this writing is situated in the life experiences of the author as well as the individual being studied. As mentioned by Denzin (1989a), "We create the persons we write about, just as they create themselves when they engage in storytelling practices" (p. 82).

life course stages and experiences These are stages in an individual's life or key events that become the focus for the biographer (Denzin, 1989a).

life history This is a form of biographical writing in which the researcher reports an extensive record of a person's life as told to the researcher (see Geiger, 1986). Thus, the individual being studied is alive and life as lived in the present is influenced by personal,

institutional, and social histories (Cole, 1994). The investigator may use different disciplinary perspectives (Smith, 1994), such as the exploration of an individual's life as representative of a culture, as in an anthropological life history.

oral history In this biographical approach, the researcher gathers personal recollections of events and their causes and effects from an individual or several individuals. This information may be collected through tape recordings or through written works of individuals who have died or are still living. It often is limited to the distinctly "modern" sphere and to accessible people (Plummer, 1983).

progressive-regressive method This is an approach to writing a biography in which the researcher begins with a key event in the subject's life and then works forward and backward from that event (Denzin, 1989a).

single individual This is the person studied in a biography. This person may be an individual with great distinction or an ordinary person. This person's life may be a lesser life, a great life, a thwarted life, a life cut short, or a life miraculous in its unapplauded achievement (Heilbrun, 1988).

stories These are aspects that surface during an interview in which the participant describes a situation, usually with a beginning, a middle, and an end, so that the researcher can capture a complete idea and integrate it, intact, into the qualitative narrative (Denzin, 1989a).

▼ PHENOMENOLOGY ▼

clusters of meanings This is the third step in phenomenological data analysis in which the researcher clusters the statements into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive statements (Moustakas, 1994).

epoche or bracketing This is the first step in “phenomenological reduction,” the process of data analysis in which the researcher sets aside, as far as is humanly possible, all preconceived experiences to best understand the experiences of participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

essential, invariant structure (or essence) This is the goal of the phenomenologist, to reduce the textural (*what*) and structural (*how*) meanings of experiences to a brief description that typifies the experiences of all of the participants in a study. All individuals experience it; hence, it is invariant, and it is a reduction to the “essentials” of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

horizontalization This is the second step in the phenomenological data analysis in which the researcher lists every significant statement relevant to the topic and gives it equal value (Moustakas, 1994).

imaginative variation or structural description Following the textural description, the researcher writes a “structural” description of an experience, addressing *how* the phenomenon was experienced. It involves seeking all possible meanings, seeking divergent perspectives, and varying the frames of reference about the phenomenon or using imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994).

intentionality of consciousness Being conscious of objects always is intentional. Thus, when I perceive a tree, “My intentional experience is a combination of the outward appearance of the tree and the tree as contained in my consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 55).

lived experiences This term emphasizes in phenomenological studies the importance of individual experiences of people as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994).

phenomenological data analysis Several approaches to analyzing phenomenological data are represented in the literature. Moustakas (1994) reviews these approaches and then advances his own. I rely on the Moustakas modification that includes the researcher bringing personal experiences into the study, the recording of significant statements and meanings, and the development of descriptions to arrive at the essences of the experiences.

phenomenological study This type of study describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon (or topic or concept) for several individuals. In this study, the researcher reduces the experiences to a central meaning or the "essence" of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

the phenomenon This is the central concept being examined by the phenomenologist. It is the concept being experienced by subjects in a study, psychological concepts such as grief, anger, or love.

philosophical perspectives Specific philosophical perspectives provide the foundation for phenomenological studies. These perspectives originated in the 1930s writings of Husserl. These perspectives include having the investigator conduct research with a broader perspective than that of traditional empirical, quantitative science; suspend his or her own preconceptions of experiences; experience an object through his or her own senses (i.e., conscious of it) as well as see it "out there" as real; and report the meaning individuals ascribe to an experience in a few statements that capture the "essence" (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990).

psychological approach This is the approach taken by psychologists who discuss the inquiry procedures of phenomenology (e.g., Giorgi, 1994; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). In their writings, they examine psychological themes for meaning, and they may incorporate their own selves into the studies.

structural description From the first three steps in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes a description of "how" the phenomenon was experienced by individuals in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

textural description From the first three steps in phenomenological data analysis, the researcher writes about *what* was experienced, a description of the meaning individuals have experienced (Moustakas, 1994).

transcendental phenomenology According to Moustakas (1994), Husserl espoused this form of phenomenology, and it becomes a guiding approach to Moustakas. In this approach, the researcher sets aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated. Also, the researcher relies on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience and uses systematic methods of analysis as advanced by Moustakas (1994).

▼ GROUNDED THEORY ▼

axial coding This step in the coding process follows open coding. The researcher takes the categories of open coding, identifies one as a central phenomenon, and then returns to the database to identify (a) what caused this phenomenon to occur, (b) what strategies or actions actors employed in response to it, (c) what context (specific) and intervening conditions (broad context) influenced the strategies, and (d) what consequences resulted from these strategies. The overall process is one of relating categories of information to the central phenomenon category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

category This is a unit of information analyzed in grounded theory research. It is composed of events, happenings, and instances of phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and given a short label. When researchers analyze grounded theory data, their analysis leads, initially, to the formation of a number of categories during the process called "open coding." Then, in "axial coding," the analyst interrelates the categories and forms a visual model.

causal conditions In axial coding, these are the categories of conditions I identify in my database that cause or influence the central phenomenon to occur.

central phenomenon This is an aspect of axial coding and the formation of the visual theory, model, or paradigm. In open coding, the researcher chooses a central category around which to develop the theory. I choose this central category by examining my open coding categories and selecting one that holds the most conceptual interest, is most frequently discussed by participants in the study, and is most "saturated" with information. I then place it at the center of my grounded theory model and label it "central phenomenon."

coding paradigm or logic diagram In axial coding, the central phenomenon, causal conditions, context, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences are portrayed in a visual diagram. This diagram is drawn with boxes and arrows indicating the process or flow of

activities. It is helpful to view this diagram as more than axial coding; it is the theoretical model developed in a grounded theory study (see Morrow & Smith, 1995).

conditional matrix This is a diagram, typically drawn late in a grounded theory study, that presents the conditions and consequences related to the phenomenon under study. It enables the researcher to both distinguish and link levels of conditions and consequences specified in the axial coding model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is a step seldom seen in data analysis in grounded theory studies.

consequences In axial coding, these are the outcomes of strategies taken by participants in the study. These outcomes may be positive, negative, or neutral (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

constant comparative This was an early term (Conrad, 1978) in grounded theory research that referred to the researcher identifying incidents, events, and activities and constantly comparing them to an emerging category to develop and saturate the category.

context In axial coding, this is the particular set of conditions within which the strategies occur (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These are specific in nature and close to the actions and interactions.

dimensionalized This is the smallest unit of information analyzed in grounded theory research. The researcher takes the properties and places them on a continuum or dimensionalizes them to see the extreme possibilities for the property. It appears in the "open coding" analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

discriminant sampling This is a form of sampling that occurs late in a grounded theory project after the researcher has developed a model. The question becomes, at this point: How would the model hold if I gather more information from people similar to those I initially interviewed? Thus, in verifying the model, the researcher then chooses sites, persons, and/or documents that "will maximize opportunities for verifying the story line, relationships between categories, and for filling in poorly developed categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 187).

generate or discover a theory Grounded theory research is the process of developing a theory, not testing a theory. Researchers might begin with a tentative theory they want to modify or no theory at all with the intent of "grounding" the study in views of participants. In either case, an inductive model of theory development is at work here, and the process is one of generating or discovering a theory grounded in views from participants in the field.

grounded theory study In this type of study, the researcher generates an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon, a theory that explains some action, interaction, or process. This is accomplished primarily through collecting interview data, making multiple visits to the field (theoretical sampling), attempting to develop and interrelate categories (constant comparison) of information, and writing a substantive or context-specific theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

in vivo codes These are codes or categories in grounded theory research where the investigator uses the exact words of the interviewee to form the names for the codes or categories. They are "catchy" and immediately draw the attention of the reader (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 69).

intervening conditions In axial coding, these are the broader conditions—broader than the context—within which the strategies occur. They might be social, economic, and political forces, for example, that influence the strategies in response to the central phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

memoing This is the process in grounded theory research of the researcher writing down ideas about the evolving theory. It could be in the form of preliminary propositions (hypotheses), ideas about emerging categories, or some aspects of the connection of categories as in axial coding. In general, these are written records of analysis that help with the formulation of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

open coding This is the first step in the data analysis process for a grounded theorist. It involves taking data (e.g., interview transcrip-

tions) and segmenting them into categories of information (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I recommend that researchers try to develop a small number of categories, slowly reducing the number from, say, 30 to 5 or 6 that become major themes in a study.

properties These are other units of information analyzed in grounded theory research. Each category in grounded theory research can be subdivided into properties that provide the broad dimensions for the category. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to them as “attributes or characteristics pertaining to a category” (p. 61). They appear in “open coding” analysis.

propositions These are hypotheses, typically written in a directional form, that relate categories in a study. They are written from the axial coding model or paradigm and might, for example, suggest why a certain cause influences the central phenomenon that, in turn, influences the use of a specific strategy.

saturation, saturate, or saturated In the development of categories and data analysis phase of grounded theory research, I want to find as many incidents, events, or activities as possible to provide support for them. In this process, I finally come to a point at which the categories are “saturated”; I no longer find new information that adds to my understanding of the category.

selective coding This is the final phase of coding the information. The researcher takes the central phenomenon and systematically relates it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I like to develop a “story” that narrates these categories and shows their interrelationship (see Creswell & Urbom, 1997).

strategies In axial coding, these are the specific actions or interactions that occur as a result of the central phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

substantive-level theory This is a low-level theory that is applicable to immediate situations. This theory evolves from the study of a

phenomenon situated in “one particular situational context” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 174). Researchers differentiate this form of theory from theories of greater abstraction and applicability, called midlevel theories, grand theories, or formal theories.

theoretical sampling In data collection for grounded theory research, the investigator selects a sample of individuals to study based on their contribution to the development of the theory. Often, this process begins with a homogeneous sample of individuals who are similar, and, as the data collection proceeds and the categories emerge, the researcher turns to a heterogeneous sample to see under what conditions the categories hold true.

▼ ETHNOGRAPHY ▼

analysis of the culture-sharing group The ethnographer develops themes—cultural themes—in the data analysis. It is a process of reviewing all of the data and segmenting them into a small set of common themes, well supported by evidence in the data (Wolcott, 1994b).

artifacts This is the focus of attention for the ethnographer as he or she determines what people make and use, such as clothes and tools (cultural artifacts) (Spradley, 1980).

behaviors These are the focus of attention for the ethnographer as he or she attempts to understand what people do (cultural behavior) (Spradley, 1980).

cultural portrait One key component of ethnographic research is composing a holistic view of the culture-sharing group or individual. The final product of an ethnography should be this larger portrait, or overview of the cultural scene, presented in all of its complexity (Spradley, 1979).

culture This term is an abstraction, something that one cannot study directly. From observing and participating in a culture-sharing group, an ethnographer can see “culture at work” and provide a description and interpretation of it (H. F. Wolcott, personal communication, October 10, 1996). It can be seen in behaviors, language, and artifacts (Spradley, 1980).

culture-sharing group This is the unit of analysis for the ethnographer as he or she attempts to understand and interpret the behavior, language, and artifacts of people. The ethnographer typically focuses on an entire group—one that shares learned, acquired behaviors—to make explicit how the group “works.” Some ethnographers will focus on part of the social-cultural system for analysis and engage in a microethnography.

deception This is another field issue that has become less and less a problem since the ethical standards were published by the American Anthropological Association. It relates to the act of the researcher intentionally deceiving the informants to gain information. This deception may involve masking the identity of the research, withholding important information about the purpose of the study, or gathering information secretly.

description of the culture-sharing group One of the first tasks of an ethnographer is to simply record a description of the culture-sharing group and incidents and activities that illustrate the culture (Wolcott, 1994b). For example, a factual account may be rendered, pictures of the setting may be drawn, or events may be chronicled.

emic and etic These terms refer to the type of information being reported and written into an ethnography, whether the researcher reports the views of the informants (emic) or his or her own personal views (etic) (Fetterman, 1989).

ethnography This is the study of an intact cultural or social group (or an individual or individuals within the group) based primarily on observations and a prolonged period of time spent by the researcher in the field. The ethnographer listens and records the voices of informants with the intent of generating a cultural portrait (Thomas, 1993; Wolcott, 1987).

fieldwork In ethnographic data collection, the researcher conducts data gathering in the "field" by going to the site or sites where the culture-sharing group can be studied. Often, this involves a prolonged period of time with varying degrees of immersion in activities, events, rituals, and settings of the cultural group (Sanjek, 1990).

function This is a theme or concept about the social-cultural system or group that the ethnographer studies. Function refers to the social relations among members of the group that help regulate behavior. For example, the researcher might document patterns of behavior of fights within and among various inner-city gangs (Fetterman, 1989).

gatekeeper This is a data collection term and refers to the individual who the researcher must visit before entering a group or cultural site. To gain access, the researcher must receive this individual's approval (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

holistic The ethnographer assumes this outlook in research to gain a comprehensive and complete picture of a social group. It might include the group's history, religion, politics, economy, and/or environment. In this way, the researcher places information about the group into a larger perspective or "contextualizes" the study (Fetterman, 1989).

immersed The ethnographic researcher becomes immersed in the field through a prolonged stay, often as long as 1 year. Whether the individual loses perspective and "goes native" is a field issue much discussed in the ethnographic literature.

interpretation of the culture-sharing group The researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the culture-sharing group. This interpretation may be informed by the literature, personal experiences, or theoretical perspectives (Wolcott, 1994b).

key informants These are individuals with whom the researcher begins in data collection because they are well informed, are accessible, and can provide leads about other information (Gilchrist, 1992).

language This is the focus of attention for the ethnographer as he or she discerns what people say (speech messages) (Spradley, 1980).

participant observation The ethnographer gathers information in many ways, but the primary approach is to observe the culture-sharing group and become a participant in the cultural setting (Jorgensen, 1989).

reactivity This field issue involves the concern that the informants in a site may be responding in a dishonest or untruthful way to the researcher. It means that the researcher needs to include verifica-

tion procedures in his or her study to check whether this issue is a problem.

reciprocity This field issue addresses the need for the participants in the study to receive something in return for their willingness to be observed and provide information. The researcher needs to consider how he or she will reimburse participants for being allowed to study them.

reflexivity This means that the writer is conscious of his or her biases, values, and experiences that are brought to a qualitative research study. Typically, the writer makes this explicit in the text (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

structure This is a theme or concept about the social-cultural system or group that the ethnographer attempts to learn. It refers to the social structure or configuration of the group, such as the kinship or political structure of the social-cultural group. This structure might be exemplified, for example, by an organizational chart (Fetterman, 1989).

▼ CASE STUDY ▼

analysis of themes Following description, the researcher then analyzes the data for specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes. Stake (1995) calls this analysis "development of issues" (p. 123).

assertions This is the last step in the analysis where the researcher makes sense of the data and provides an interpretation of the "lessons learned" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). The assertions may be couched in terms of personal views or in terms of theories or constructs in the literature.

bounded system The "case" selected for study has boundaries, often bounded by time and place. It also has interrelated parts that form a whole. Hence, the proper case to be studied is both "bounded" and a "system" (Stake, 1995).

case This is the "bounded system" or the "object" of study. It might be an event, a process, a program, or several people (Stake, 1995). If a single individual is to be studied, then I generally refer the researcher to a biographical approach.

case study In qualitative research, this is the study of a "bounded system" with the focus being either the case or an issue that is illustrated by the case (or cases) (Stake, 1995). A qualitative case study provides an in-depth study of this "system," based on a diverse array of data collection materials, and the researcher situates this system or case within its larger "context" or setting.

categorical aggregation This is an aspect of data analysis in case study research where the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge (Stake, 1995).

collective case study This type of case study consists of multiple cases. It might be either intrinsic or instrumental, but its defining feature is

that the researcher examines several cases (e.g., multiple case study) (Stake, 1995).

context of the case In analyzing and describing a case, the researcher sets the case within its setting. This setting may be broadly conceptualized (e.g., large historical, social, political issues) or narrowly conceptualized (e.g., the immediate family, the physical location, the time period in which the study occurred) (Stake, 1995).

cross-case analysis This form of analysis applies to a collective case (Stake, 1995) when the researcher examines more than one case. It involves examining themes across cases to discern themes that are common to all cases. It is an analysis step that typically follows within-case analysis when the researcher studies multiple cases.

description This means simply stating the “facts” about the case as recorded by the investigator. This is the first step in analysis of data in a qualitative case study, and Stake (1995) calls it “narrative description” (p. 123).

direction interpretation This is an aspect of interpretation in case study research where the researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it without looking for multiple instances of it. It is a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways (Stake, 1995).

embedded analysis In this approach to data analysis, the researcher selects one analytic aspect of the case for presentation (Yin, 1989).

holistic analysis In this approach to data analysis, the researcher examines the entire case (Yin, 1989) and presents description, themes, and interpretations or assertions related to the whole case.

instrumental case study This is a type of case study with the focus on a specific issue rather than on the case itself. The case then becomes a vehicle to better understand the issue (Stake, 1995).

intrinsic case study This is a type of case study with the focus of the study on the case because it holds intrinsic or unusual interest

(Stake, 1995). I would consider our gunman case study (Asmussen & Creswell, 1995) to be an intrinsic case study.

multi-site/within-site When sites are selected for the “case,” they might be located at different geographical locations. This type of study is considered to be “multi-site.” Alternatively, the case might be at a single location and considered a “within-site” study.

multiple sources of information One aspect that characterizes good case study research is the use of many different sources of information to provide “depth” to the case. Yin (1989), for example, recommends that the researcher use as many as six different types of information in his or her case study.

naturalistic generalizations In the interpretation of a case, an investigator undertakes a case study to make the case understandable. This understanding may be what the reader learns from the case or its application to other cases (Stake, 1995).

patterns This is an aspect of data analysis in case study research where the researcher establishes patterns and looks for a correspondence between two or more categories to establish a small number of categories (Stake, 1995).

purposeful sampling This is a major issue in case study research, and the researcher needs to clearly specify the type of sampling strategy in selecting the case (or cases) and a rationale for it. It applies to both the selection of the case to study as well as the sampling of information used within the case. I use Miles and Huberman’s (1994) list of sampling strategies and apply it in this book to case studies as well as to other traditions of inquiry.

triangulation of information In qualitative research, the convergence of sources of information, views of investigators, different theories, and different methodologies represents the triangulation of ideas (Denzin, 1970) to help support the development of themes. In case study research, Stake (1995) places emphasis on sources of data and suggests that the researcher triangulate differently based on “data situations” in the case.

within-case analysis This type of analysis may apply to either a single case or multiple collective case studies. It means that the researcher identifies themes within a single case. For collective case studies, this analysis may suggest unique themes to a case, or themes that are common to all cases studied.

▼ OTHER TERMS ▼

axiological This qualitative assumption holds that all research is value laden including the value systems of the inquirer, the theory, the paradigm used, and the social and cultural norms for either the inquirer or the respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Accordingly, the researcher admits and discusses these values in his or her research.

critical theory Central themes that a critical researcher might explore include the scientific study of social institutions and their transformations through interpreting the meanings of social life; the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles; and a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities (Fay, 1987; Morrow & Brown, 1994).

encoding This term means that the writer places certain features in his or her writing to help a reader know what to expect. These features not only help the reader but also aid the writer, who can then draw on the habits of thought, glosses, and specialized knowledge of the reader (Richardson, 1990). Such features might be the overall organization, code words, images, and other "signposts" for the reader. As applied in this book, the features consist of terms and procedures of a tradition that become part of the language of all facets of research design (e.g., purpose statement, research subquestions, methods).

epistemological This is another philosophical assumption for the qualitative researcher. It addresses the relationship between the researcher and that being studied as interrelated, not independent. Rather than "distance," as I call it, a "closeness" follows between the researcher and that being researched. This closeness, for example, is manifest through time in the field, collaboration, and the impact that that being researched has on the researcher.

feminist research approaches In feminist research methods, the goals are to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative (Stewart, 1994).

foreshadowing This term means that writers use techniques to portend the development of ideas (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In this book, I use the idea mainly in writing the problem statement, purpose statement, and research subquestions to foreshadow the data analysis procedures.

issue subquestions These are subquestions in a qualitative study that follow the central underlying question. They are written to address the major concerns and perplexities to be resolved, the "issue" of a study (Stake, 1995). They typically are few in number and are posed as questions.

methodological This assumption holds that a qualitative researcher conceptualizes the research process in a certain way. For example, a qualitative inquirer relies on views of participants and discusses their views within the context in which they occur to inductively develop, from particulars to abstractions, ideas in a study (Creswell, 1994).

ontological This is a philosophical assumption about the nature of reality. It addresses the question: When is something real? The answer provided is that something is real when it is constructed in the minds of the actors involved in the situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Thus, reality is not "out there," apart from the minds of actors.

paradigm or worldview This is the philosophical stance taken by the researcher that provides a basic set of beliefs that guides action (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). It defines, for its holder, "the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) further call this the "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises" (p. 13). In this discussion, I extend this "net" to also include the axiological and rhetorical assumptions.

postmodernism This ideological perspective is considered a family of theories and perspectives that have something in common (Slife & Williams, 1995). Postmodernists advance a reaction or critique of

the 19th-century Enlightenment and early 20th-century emphasis on technology, rationality, reason, universals, science, and the positivist, scientific method (Bloland, 1995; Stringer, 1993). Postmodernists assert that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations.

qualitative research This is an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

research design I refer to the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing the narrative, not simply the methods such as data collection, analysis, and report writing (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

rhetorical This assumption means that the qualitative investigator uses terms and a narrative unique to the qualitative approach. The narrative is personal and literary (Creswell, 1994). For example, the researcher might use the first-person pronoun "I" instead of the impersonal third-person voice.

social science theories These are the theoretical explanations that social scientists use to explain the world (Slife & Williams, 1995). They are based on empirical evidence that has accumulated in social science fields such as sociology, psychology, education, economics, urban studies, and communication. As a set of interrelated concepts, variables, and propositions, they serve to explain, predict, and provide generalizations about phenomena in the world (Kerlinger, 1979). They may have broad applicability (grand theories) or narrow applications (minor working hypotheses) (Flinders & Mills, 1993).

topical subquestions These are subquestions in a qualitative study that follow the central underlying question. They cover the anticipated needs for information (Stake, 1995), and I have extended Stake's

idea to include anticipated procedures in the study for data analysis and reporting the study. In this way, the topical subquestions foreshadow the procedures to be used in the study.

tradition of inquiry This is an approach to qualitative research that has a distinguished history in one of the social science disciplines and that has spawned books, journals, and distinct methodologies. These traditions, as I call them, are known in other books as "strategies of inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) or "varieties" (Tesch, 1990).

verisimilitude This is a criterion for a good literary study in which the writing seems "real" and "alive," transporting the reader directly into the world of the study (Richardson, 1994).

APPENDIX B



A Biography

This article discusses the use of life history as a method of ethnographic research among stigmatized, unempowered people. The author describes and analyzes the process of eliciting the life history of a man with mental retardation. To combine life history interviewing with the detailed observation of behavior in a naturalistic setting is typical of the ethnographic tradition; interviews with people from marginalized social groups (particularly those who are considered mentally "disabled") are, however, often decontextualized and conducted in quasi-clinical settings that emphasize the retrospective reconstruction of the life. By treating a person with mental retardation as a contextualized participant in a world outside the clinical setting and by eliciting the life narrative in the course of following that person as he attempts to make sense of life outside the institution, it is possible to clarify the dynamic in the formation of a metaphor of personal identity. This technique might not be appropriate for all persons with mental disability, but when it *can* be used, it helps to demonstrate the proposition that mental retardation is not a monolithic condition whose victims are distinguished by arbitrary gradations of standardized test scores. Rather, it is only one of many factors that figure into a person's strategy for coping with the world.

ON THE BUS WITH VONNIE LEE Explorations in Life History and Metaphor

MICHAEL V. ANGROSINO
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A LIFE IN PROCESS

VONNIE LEE

Vonnie Lee Hargrett celebrated his 29th birthday while I was writing this article in the summer of 1993 in the Florida city to which his parents had migrated from a rural part of the state. The family was, in Vonnie Lee's own words, "poor White trash—real crackers." His father was

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QUALITATIVE
INQUIRY