Lecture Notes

# Chapter 16: Phenomenology, Ethnography, and Grounded Theory

## Learning Objectives

* 1. Compare and contrast the three major approaches to qualitative research discussed in this chapter: phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory.
  2. Define and explain phenomenology.
  3. Define and explain ethnography.
  4. Define and explain grounded theory.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the final three qualitative research designs: phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory research designs.

## Annotated Chapter Outline

1. Introduction
   1. In Chapter 15, we discussed the qualitative research approaches of narrative inquiry and case study research.
   2. In this chapter, we discuss three more major types or methods of qualitative research: phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory. For each of these research designs, we discuss the design and its defining characteristics. In addition, information on data collection, analysis, and report writing are provided for each type of research design.
2. Phenomenology: In phenomenology, the foundational question is “What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon by an individual or by many individuals.”
   1. **Phenomenology:** the description of one or more individuals’ consciousness and experience of a phenomenon.
      1. Provides a view into participant’s **lifeworlds** (an individual’s inner world of immediate experience) and to understand their personal meanings constructed from their “lived experiences.”
      2. To experience something fully, you need to **bracket** (to suspend your preconceptions or learned feelings about a phenomenon to experience its essence) or suspend any preconceptions or learned feelings you have about the phenomenon because you want to experience it as it is.
      3. Your experience of the phenomenon because part of your consciousness.
   2. Examples of Phenomenology
      1. Phenomenological studies have focused on:
         1. What it is like to be a gifted student in a rural high school (Cross & Stewart, 1995).
         2. A teacher’s meaning or and experience of using an experiential learning approach with her students (Green, 1995).
         3. Children’s experiences of being in a mathematics classroom (T. Brown, 1996).
         4. The meaning and experience of empowering other people from the perspective of the person doing the empowering (Muller, 1994).
      2. Discussion Question: Ask students to compare and contrast narrative inquiry (Chapter 15) and phenomenology.
   3. Types of Phenomenology
      1. Husserlian Phenomenology
         1. Focus on the unique characteristics of an individual’s experience of something.
         2. Researchers do not generally assume that individuals are completely unique. As a result, they strive to understand the commonality of human experience or **essence** (the invariant structure of the experience) that is common or consistent across participants
         3. The search for the essences of a phenomenon is the defining characteristic of phenomenology. See Exhibit 16.1.
      2. **Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA):** a new type of phenomenology more focused on situated, interpreted, and particular lived experiences than on transcendental experiences.
         1. Interest is in research participants’ distinctive individualized perspectives on their experiences rather than experiences that cut across people.
         2. Begins with particular people’s experiences at particular places and times and works up to understanding different group’s shared experiences.
      3. Discussion Question: In what ways are Husserlian phenomenology and IPA similar and how are they different?
   4. Data Collection, Analysis, and Report Writing
      1. Typically, researcher collects data from several individuals and depicts their experience of something.
      2. Data are typically collected through in-depth interviews, and the researcher works to distill the data to the common core or essence of the experience as described by the participants.
      3. Participants must be able to relive the experience in their minds and able to focus on the experience and nothing else.
      4. Participants are asked to recall a specific experience he or she has had, to think about the specific experience carefully, and then describe the experience to the researcher.
         1. Written narratives can also be used.
      5. For data analysis, the researcher looks for significant statements or statements that have particular relevance to the phenomenon being studied.
         1. Some researchers use verbatim statements while others interpret and describe the meanings of the significant statements. Participants must verify the interpretations.
         2. Themes are looked for by researcher
         3. Member checking is used for validity if possible.
      6. Final report is a narrative that includes a description of the participants, the methods used to obtain the information, a rich description of the fundamental structure of the experience, and a discussion of the findings.
         1. Individual or group differences may be discussed.
         2. Should be written so that readers feel that they understand what it would be like to experience the phenomenon itself.
      7. Point out examples of phenomenology research in the chapter: Exhibits 16.2 and 16.3,
      8. Discussion Question: In phenomenology, describe how data are collected, analyzed, and reported.
3. Ethnography: In ethnography, the foundational question is: What are the cultural characteristics of this group of people or of this cultural scene?
   1. **Ethnography:** a form of qualitative research focused on discovering and describing the culture of a group of people.
   2. The Idea of Culture
      1. **Culture:** a system of shared beliefs, values, practices, perspectives, folk knowledge, language, norms, rituals, and material objects and artifacts that members of a group use in understanding their world and in relating to others.
         1. **Shared beliefs:** the specific cultural conventions or statements that people who share a culture hold to be true or false.
         2. **Shared values:** the culturally defined standards about what is good or bad or desirable or undesirable.
         3. **Norms:** the written and unwritten rules that specify appropriate group behavior.
         4. **Material culture**: material things produced by group members (e.g., books, art, buildings).
         5. **Nonmaterial culture:** shared believes, values, norms, and so on of a group.
         6. **Subculture:** a culture embedded within a larger culture.
      2. People become members of a culture through socialization. They come to internalize the culture and make the values and beliefs of their own.
      3. Discussion question: Have students identify different cultures and describe whey it is a culture.
   3. Examples of Ethnographic Research
      1. Deering (1996) studied the culture of a middle school that was known to be supportive of inclusion.
      2. Tunnicliffe (1995) observed and listened to children visiting a zoo.
      3. Harry (1992) observed and interviewed parents from 12 Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican American families with children receiving special education services.
   4. Types of Ethnographic Research
      1. **Ethnology:** the comparative study of cultural groups
         1. Involves conducting or comparing a series of separate ethnographic studies of the same or different cultural groups to identify general patterns and rules of social behavior.
      2. **Ethnohistory:** the study of the cultural past of a group of people.
         1. Often completed during the early stages of an ethnography to identify members’ cultural roots and see how the group has changed (or not) over time.
         2. Data collected from older people in the group as well as documents, oral histories, newspapers, and other resources.
         3. Can also be the end purpose of the research.
      3. **Autoethnography:** like an autobiography written by a qualitative researcher, focuses on self-examination, self-reflection, and purposive inclusion of extensive cultural and contextual description and detail of one’s life.
      4. Discussion Question: Compare and contrast the three types of ethnographic research.
   5. Data Collection, Analysis, and Report Writing
      1. Requires extensive fieldwork, often 6 months to a year.
      2. Researcher typically is participant or participant observer.
      3. Data collection and analysis are concurrent or alternating
         1. Researchers collect some data, analyze the data, return to field to collect more data, analyze those data, and repeat this process many times.
         2. Research questions sometimes change.
         3. Researchers must avoid **ethnocentrism** (judging people from a different culture according to the standards of your own culture).
         4. Researchers must take on **emic** (special words or terms used by people in their social and cultural groups) and **etic** (an external, scientific view of reality) perspectives when analyzing data.
         5. **Emic terms**: special words or terms used by people in their social and cultural groups.
         6. **Etic terms:** “objective” outsiders’ words or special terms used by social scientists to describe a group.
         7. Researchers need to use emic and etic perspectives. Using only the emic perspective would be **going native** (identifying so completely with the group being studied that you can no longer provide and “objective outsider” or etic perspective).
         8. Researchers try to use **holism** (the idea that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts) in its description.
         9. Discussion Question: Why is it important for ethnographers to use both an emic and etic perspective?
4. Grounded Theory: the foundational question is what theory or explanation emerges from an analysis of the data collected about this phenomenon.
   1. **Grounded Theory:** A general methodology for developing theory that is grouped in data systematically gathered and analyzed.
      1. Theory generation rather than theory confirmation
      2. Theory emerges from the collected data.
   2. Characteristics of a Grounded Theory
      1. Four important characteristics
         1. Fit: Does the theory correspond to real-world data?
         2. Understanding: Is the theory clear and understandable?
         3. Generality: Is the theory abstract enough to move beyond the specifics in the original research study?
         4. Control: Can the theory be applied to produce real-world results?
      2. Grounded theory is a recursive process: data are continually collected, theory is elaborated and modified in future studies.
      3. Discussion Question: Describe the characteristics of grounded theory research which are similar to and very different from phenomenology and ethnography.
   3. Example of a Grounded Theory
      1. Creswell and Brown (1992): How college and university department chairpersons interact with their faculty members.
      2. See Figure 16.1.
   4. Data Collection, Analysis, and Report Writing
      1. Data collection begins at initial contact with the phenomenon and continues throughout the development of the grounded theory.
         1. Concurrent and continual activities
         2. Most common data collection approach is open-ended interviews although other techniques like observation can be used.
      2. Data analysis:
         1. **Constant comparative method:** constant interplay among the researcher, the data, the categories, and the developing theory.
         2. Researcher needs **theoretical sensitivity:** thinking effectively about what kinds of data need to be collected and what aspects of already-collected data are the most important for the grounded theory.
         3. Three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.
         4. **Open coding:** reading transcripts line by line and identifying and coding the concepts found in the data.
         5. **Axial coding:** organizing the concepts and making them more abstract
         6. **Selective coding:** focusing on the main ideas, developing the story, and finalizing the grounded theory.
         7. Coding is completed when **theoretical saturation** (when no new information or concepts are emerging from the data and the grounded theory has been validated) occurs.
      3. The research report reflects the theory generating process.
         1. Major research question or topic is discussed first.
         2. Participants are discussed relatively early in the report.
         3. Results section is relatively long.
         4. The final grounded theory is also discussed.
      4. Discussion Question: Why is the research report for grounded theory research structured as described in the book?