

## Identifying Various Qualitative Approaches

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Abstract

The following few pages will discuss the qualitative research approach. It will provide a comparison and contrast of the various methods to include identifying their strengths and weaknesses. In choosing the qualitative method to conduct one's research there are several formats from which to choose. A good researcher will decide if their work will use qualitative, quantitative or mixed-method methodology to complete their project.

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As a researcher on any topic the first question to be asked is what would be the best method to obtain my research. The three articles we were assigned speaks to various methods of conducting qualitative research. “Researchers use qualitative approaches to explore the behavior perspectives, feelings and experiences of people and what lies at the core of their lives.” (Seamon, 1987). This encompasses a great deal especially if your question is concerning a social issue. Therefore before deciding the method, what is the question you are looking to answer?

All researchers have a passionate question they are wanting to answer or perhaps initiate a change to a major societal issue. As stated in the articles, “qualitative methodology is also useful in the exploration of change or conflict.” (Seamon, 1987). The articles identified several different methods dealing with qualitative research. “Methodology refers to the principles and ideas on which researchers base their procedures and strategies.” (Seamon, 1987). Ethnography was discussed and it focuses on culture and customs. A researcher may want to explore the culture and/or customs of a particular African tribe. Where did their traditions start and how are they passed on from generation to generation?

An article also discussed the positivist paradigm approach and the interpretivist paradigm approach. One focuses on the methodology of natural science, the other on how human beings are different from the world we live in. The question may be asked, what is a paradigm?

“A paradigm consists of theoretical ideas and technical procedures that a group of scientists adopt and which are rooted in a particular worldview with its own language and terminology.” (Seaman, 1987).

Again, your topic would dictate your approach. If you are researching natural science and the natural way of things, quite naturally the positivist approach would be a dominant factor in your research. However, “qualitative researchers choose a variety of approaches and procedures

to achieve their aims. These include ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, conversation analysis, discourse analysis and cooperative inquiry among others.” (Seamon, 1987). A researcher would find in-depth information on each of these methods before deciding on one particular choice. Article one of this week’s assignment provided information on qualitative research and its’ methods. This article provided the elements used in most qualitative approaches which were quite informative.

The focal point of article two was phenomenology. “Phenomenology-the interpretive study of human experience. The aim is to examine and clarify human situations, events meanings and experiences as they spontaneously occur in the course of daily life.” (von Eckartsberg, 1998, pg. 3). This article spoke on the three methods of phenomenology: first person, existential and hermeneutical. It explained each of the methods in detail, which will help in deciding how to move forward in your research. “An issue with phenomenological interpretations is the potential that several phenomenologists, dealing with the same descriptive evidence, may present their interpretations differently and arrive at entirely different meanings.” (Seamon, 1987). In essence phenomenology is studying the way people deal with life and its’ day to day activities. One factor of phenomenology is lifeworld, “which deals refers to the routine and the unusual, the mundane and the surprising, whether an experience is ordinary or extraordinary.” (Seamon, 1987).

Article three dealt with qualitative methods of psychological research on religion and spirituality. It was the briefest of the three articles, the author Coyle stated, “spirituality a belief in the sacredness of life; an emphasis on wholeness and connectedness, the notion of an eternal soul.” (2008, pp. 56-67). This method would only be used if you are researching the psychological effects of religion and/or spirituality as it pertains to any given situation. If you

believe that spirituality goes beyond what man can hold or explain, how can you truly find the answer to something that is beyond this realm. In making that statement, I agree with the quote in the article from Rowan which says, “the human experience that deals with religious/spiritual concepts and experiences lies beyond the reach of research.” (2001, pp. 7-8).

After reading the three articles, I would state that the first article provided the most information that would indeed help a researcher in choosing the methods he/she would use in furthering their research. It explained different several different methods as well as provided precise differences between the qualitative and quantitative methods. It listed elements of qualitative research and stated its goal is to move from a narrow analysis to a broader one. Article two was a good article discussing specifically phenomenology and the methods of that process. It would be a method that I would consider using and exploring even more. As it defined the three methods, it provided information that would give you more understanding and clarity. Article three did not provide as much information as article one, but I do concur with a statement in the article, that it would be a difficult method to use as religion/spirituality is a personal subject and can't truly be confined to human research.

References

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