Multiple Case Narrative

A qualitative approach to studying multiple populations

Asher Shkedi

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Multiple Case Narrative

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Volume 7

Multiple Case Narrative:
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by Asher Shkedi

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John Benjamins Publishing Company
Amsterdam / Philadelphia

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences – Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Asher Shkedi
Multiple Case Narrative : A qualitative approach to studying multiple populations / Asher Shkedi.
p. cm. (Studies in Narrativity, ISSN 1568–2706 ; v. 7)
Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
1. Qualitative research--Methodology. 2. Population research--Methodology. 3. Discourse analysis, Narrative.

H62.S4644 2005
302/.072/3--dc22 2005050762
ISBN 90 272 2647 4 (Hb; alk. paper)

John Benjamins Publishing Co. · P.O. Box 36224 · 1020 ME Amsterdam · The Netherlands
John Benjamins North America · P.O. Box 27519 · Philadelphia PA 19118-0519 · USA

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I am indebted to my colleagues and students who provided me with support and served as a sounding board during the research for writing of this book. My special thanks to the many participants whose narratives have formed the basis of my research. They gave of their time to be observed and interviewed and I am grateful to them. Finally, I want to thank the members of my family for their encouragement, and special thanks to my son, Yuval, who has developed a software for qualitative research analysis supporting the methodology presented in this book.

INTRODUCTION

This book introduces a methodology for the construction of a comprehensive narrative description and narrative-based theory from the study of multiple populations. This research strategy has emerged from my experience in the field of qualitative research over the last fifteen years, during which I have conducted numerous narrative research projects, each of which was based on the investigation of tens of participants.

In the last two decades, there have been a large number of publications devoted to the many varieties of qualitative research, including narrative inquiry. However, as I covered more and more material, I was surprised to find that while there were elaborations on almost every type of qualitative variety, there was no strategy for conducting constructivist-qualitative research that allows for the investigation of multiple narratives or for the building of theory based on such an investigation. Some qualitative research varieties, like multiple (or collective) case studies, approximate such a method but they are limited in that they enable only the investigation of relatively small numbers of case narratives.

It seems, therefore, that there is a need for a comprehensive articulation of a strategy and method for a narrative study of a large number of cases. For my own field research, I developed a model that I called Multiple Case Narrative. This book is an elaboration of the principles and techniques of this strategy.

This book has two parallel foci. On the one hand it is a conceptual treatise, focusing on the principles of the Multiple Case Narrative. On the other hand, it also has a practical "how-to" focus with a step-by-step guide to conducting a Multiple Case Narrative. The book is intended to be accessible, reader-friendly and comprehensive. It is not assumed that the readers have a strong background in the methodologies of narrative study and qualitative research. The book is aimed at applied and academic researchers, and is devoted first and foremost to educational academics and practitioners while being relevant also for undergraduate and graduate students. Although I am an educational researcher and most of the examples in the book are taken from the arena of education, the method presented here is germane to research in other arenas like sociology, psychology, social work, anthropology, and so on. Furthermore, while this book focuses on the methodology

of the Multiple Case Narrative, it is also relevant to those who are interested in other qualitative varieties like single and collective narrative inquiry, single and collective case study, ethnography and so on, because each of the procedures and techniques described here can be easily utilized by the readers for conducting other types of qualitative research.

We have recently developed new software for qualitative research analysis which we have called "Narralizer". This software is based on the analysis procedure described in this book but it may also be used for other qualitative analysis procedures. For more information, refer to http://www.narralizer.com

The book:

This book introduces the methods and approach of Muliple Case Narratives. Each of the procedures and techniques can be easily utilized by the readers for conducting other varieties of qualitative research. However, the specific combination and order of these procedures and techniques outlined here is particular to the mode of inquiry used in the Multiple Case Narrative. In discussing this method, we emphasize the methodology of this research strategy, its unique theoretical assumptions and its commonalties with other strategies of qualitative research.

In chapter 1, I compare the assumptions of constructivist-narrative research to those of positivistic-quantitative research. I insist on the importance of the research "paradigm", its worldview and general perspectives, and discuss four fundamental questions that deal with aspects of the research assumptions: The ontological question, the epistemological question, the methodological question, and the cognitive question. Chapter 2 describes in brief some of the characteristics of the Multiple Case Narrative and illuminates the uniqueness of this methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce to the reader some of the basic concepts and ideas of this research methodology. These concepts and ideas will be discussed in depth in the following chapters. Chapter 3 has three foci: the role of theory and conceptual perspective in guiding the researchers in their study, the issue of research questions, and the research design. Each of these is connected to the other and they influence one another.

Chapter 4 and 5 of the book are concerned with data collection. While chapter 4 focuses mainly on the principles of different methods of data collection and introduces several assumptions characteristic of this process, chapter 5 deals with their procedures and techniques. Most of the discussion is devoted to the in-depth interview which is the primary method of gathering data in Multiple Case Narrative. Involved observation is presented as a secondary source of data, and stimulated recall interviews and focus groups are also introduced.

Chapters 6 to 11 focuses on data analysis. Chapter 6 serves as an introduction

and deals with the basic perspectives and methods involved in the procedure of data analysis. In chapters 7 to 10, I introduce separately the four stages of data analysis: the initial stage, the mapping stage, the focused stage, and the theoretical stage. I explain the conceptual as well as the technical aspects of each stage, and for each stage I explain the connections and relationships between the categories and the premises involved in the process of categorization. Chapter 11 discusses the principles and technical aspects of the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis.

Chapter 12 is devoted to the final report of the research and relates to the organization, components, options and writing style of the Multiple Case Narrative report. Chapter 13 deals with the issue of trustworthiness. I explain the unique principles of trustworthiness in constructivist-qualitative research, offer new understandings of the concepts: validity, reliability and generalization, and emphasize the central place of the human - researchers, colleagues and readers - in determining the degree of trustworthiness of the research.

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CHAPTER 1

THE RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS OF THE MULTIPLE CASE NARRATIVE

This book introduces a research strategy, Multiple Case Narrative; a method which allows for the study of a large number of people, from the constructivist-qualitative research perspective. We start our discussion by explaining the assumptions of this type of research.

A research paradigm

A paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. Paradigms tell what is important, legitimate, and reasonable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In research, a paradigm has come to mean a set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality.

> A paradigm provides the largest framework within which research takes place. It is the world view within which researchers work. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 4)

Kuhn (1962) was the first to introduce the concept of paradigm into the history and sociology of science. Kuhn discusses two phases or periods of research in science: normal and revolutionary. Research during 'normal' periods can be thought of as an approach to a puzzle from within a general pattern already known and outlined, implicitly or explicitly, by the major theories of that science. The postulates of a research paradigm are regarded as self-evident truths in times of normal science. Nonetheless, Kuhn argues, as more and more of the pieces of the puzzle are put together, some of them may not fit. In other words, a researcher might find some new pieces of information which have been verified by the methods of the accepted science but which do not fit into the prevailing paradigms. As the researcher finds data which are verified using acceptable methods but that do not support existing theories, it becomes more and more difficult to support those theories (Kuhn, 1962).

The notion of 'assumptions' is a key to understanding any paradigm. An assumption is something that cannot be proved but may be stipulated. All paradigms rest on a certain set of assumptions. Accordingly, these paradigms are basic belief

systems, which cannot be proven or disproven, but which represent the most fundamental positions we are willing to take. At some level we must stop giving reasons and simply accept whatever ideas serve as our basic set of beliefs - our paradigm. The paradigm itself cannot be tested; rather, the paradigm provides the basis on which we build our verifiable knowledge.

It is useful to think of a paradigm as a set of beliefs, a set of assumptions we make, which serve as touch stones in guiding our thoughts and activities.

> Paradigmatic thought attends to the features or attributes that essentially define particular items as instances of a category. This kind of thinking focuses on what makes the item a member of a category. […] Paradigmatic thought links the particular to the formal. […] The power of paradigmatic thought is to bring order to experience by seeing individual things as belonging to a category. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 10)

The value of paradigm assumptions is that they provide the bedrock on which research may be built. The assumptions of the paradigm shape the way researchers approach problems and the methods they use to collect and analyze data, in addition to the very type of problems they choose to investigate. One set of answers, the positivist paradigm - also referred to as the quantitative, conventional or scientific paradigm - has been dominant for the past several hundred years. The constructivist paradigm - also sometimes called the naturalist, qualitative, hermeneutic, phenomenological, or interpretive paradigm - has also been in existence for several hundred years, but has not been as widely accepted or understood. The positivists' position on research is based on a fundamentally different set of axioms or postulates than is constructivitist research (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

There are three basic questions that researchers have put to themselves as they seek to understand how we come to know what we know (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Sciarra, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000):

[1] What is the nature of reality?
[2] What is the relationship of the knower to the known?
[3] What are the ways of finding out knowledge?

> The basic beliefs that define inquiry paradigms can be summarized by responses given by proponents of any given paradigm to three fundamental questions which are interconnected in such a way that the answer given to any one question, taken in any order, constrains how the others may be answered. (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, pp. 200-201)

We propose adding one more basic question which is a consequence of the answers given to the three first questions:

[4] How do people know reality?

The way in which an individual answers these questions is his or her basic belief system or the paradigm within which he or she is working. To a

certain degree, the answer one gives to the fourth question is an overview of the three first paradigm assumptions.

What is the nature of reality?

The first paradigmatic research question is 'what is the nature of reality?', or in other words: 'what is it that can be known?' This type of question is usually called the ontological question. "Ontology is that branch of philosophy (specifically, of metaphysics) that is concerned with issues of existence or being as such." (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 83). To ask: 'what is the nature of reality?' as a philosophic question about reality affects the way we do research or engage in any other less rigorous forms of inquiry. The way we understand the nature of reality directly affects the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Positivism and constructivism are the two overarching perspectives that shape our understanding of research. In general, qualitative research is based on a constructivist and naturalistic position, while quantitative research is based on a positivist position. The word 'positivism' was first coined by Auguste Comte as early as the 1830s. For Comte, positivism was synonymous with science, i.e. with positive or observable facts (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Adherents to the positivistic paradigm address the ontological question by asserting that there exists an 'objective reality'. The aim of positivistic inquiry is to describe this observable and objective reality as exactly as possible.

Constructivist-qualitative inquiry is distinguished by its emphasis on a holistic treatment of phenomena (Stake, 1995). Researchers using qualitative-constructivist methods strive to understand phenomena and situations as wholes (Rist, 1982; Henwood, 1996; Lincoln and Guba, 2000). While the postulates of the positivist position are seen by their proponents as sequential and divisible into parts, the postulates of the constructivist position are seen as multidirectional and interconnected. Accordingly, the constructivist approach sees the world as complex and interconnected, and thus constructivist research must maintain the complexity if the explanation is to be trustworthy and true (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The holistic approach assumes that a grasp of the context of a phenomenon is essential for understanding the reality of that phenomenon (Patton, 1980). Constructivist ontology emphasizes the importance of context in understanding the phenomenon. It tends to place great emphasis on the historical conditions in which events and situations occur, and argues that parts cannot be understood outside of their relationship to the whole in which they take place (Eisner, 1979 A; Huberman and Miles, 1994). Constructivist-qualitative researchers appreciate the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts and their role in constructing the reality of experience (Stake, 1995). Constructivist-qualitative researchers value context

sensitivity and tend to place considerable emphasis on situational and structural contexts, that is, understanding a phenomenon in all its complexities and within its particular situation and environment. This approach contrasts directly with positivistic-quantitative research which may be multivariate, but which eliminates all of the unique aspects of the context in order to apply the results to the largest possible number of subjects and experiments (Strauss, 1987; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The positivistic paradigm's approach to research sees information organized in hierarchies; that is, something is always at the bottom (subordinate) and something else is always at the top (superordinate). Mechanical forms of relationships characterize the positivistic approach. These relationships can be represented by a one-way flow chart. In contrast, the constructivist position sees a heterarchical organization of information in which experiences and relationships are interwoven in a web of meaning. A holographic image is an appropriate metaphor for understanding the types of relationships in the constructivist position. A holographic reproduction is three dimensional. To alter or distort one part of the holographic image is to change the entire image. It is the interconnectedness of the parts of the whole, which distinguishes a holographic form of relationship from a mechanical one (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

Researchers using the positivistic approach explain their findings as linearly causal, that is, A causes B. Many of the underlying laws of the positivistic approach take the form of cause-effect relationships. "It is the discovery of causal laws that represents the bottom line for scientists." (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 85). This contrasts with the constructivist position which states that causality is mutual, that is, A and B affect one another in a symbiotic way (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). From the perspective of the constructivist paradigm "there exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by natural laws, causal or otherwise: a relativist ontology" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 86). Accordingly, if there is no objective reality then there are no natural laws, and cause-effect attributions simply do not explain or describe the reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

The relationship of the knower to the known

The second research paradigm question is 'what is the relationship of the knower to the known (or the knowable)?' Another way to phrase the question is: 'How can we be sure that we know what we know?' This is usually called the epistemological question. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge "is that branch of philosophy that deals with the origin, nature, and limits of human knowledge" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 83). Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge, its presuppositions and bases, and the general reliability of the claims to knowledge (Fenstermacher, 1994).

The positivistic paradigm argues that it is possible to maintain an objective posture with respect to the phenomenon being studied (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). On the other hand, the epistemological question is addressed by adherents of the constructivist paradigm by asserting that it is impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; 1998). The constructivist position sees the individual and his or her world as co-dependent. "The viewer then is part of what is viewed rather than separate from it. What a viewer sees shapes what he or she will define, measure, and analyze" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524). In the truest sense, the person is viewed as having no existence apart from the world, and the world as having no existence apart from the person (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

> If knowledge can be separated into parts and examined individually, it follows that the knower or the researcher can stand apart from who or what he is examining. On the other hand, if knowledge is constructed, then the knower cannot be totally separated from what is known: The world is constituted. […] researchers within the two paradigms ask different questions and approach research in different ways. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 11)

According to the constructivist position, the "reality" that we impute to the "worlds" we inhabit is a constructed one (Bruner 1996). Experience is the basis on which we construct meaning and that meaning depends significantly upon our ability to get in touch with the world in which we live (Simons, 1996). The epistemology of constructivist-qualitative researchers is existential (nondeterminist) (Stake, 1995). Constructivist-qualitative researchers seek to understand a situation as it is constructed by the participants. The task of these researchers is to stay as close as possible to the particular construction of the world of the participants who originally experienced it (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). "They prefer […] to write texts which remain close to the actual experiences of the people they are writing about" (Denzin, 1995, p. 44).

The positivistic position "has had the advantage of defined objective and subjective as they relate to research. Therefore, objective has come to mean true, factual, and real. By default, subjective has come to mean partly-true, tentative, and less-than-real" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 20). Accordingly, the positivistic researchers attempt to arrive at, and in fact claim to achieve, objectivity through the use of their information gathering tools such as standardized tests, and mathematical or statistical analyses. On the other hand, the epistemology of the constructivist approach is that "the meaning of any fact, proposition, or encounter is relative to the perspective or frame of reference in terms of which it is constructed. […] Any particular individual's idiosyncratic interpretations of the world are constantly subject to judgment against what are taken to be the canonical beliefs of the culture at large" (Bruner, 1996, pp. 13-14).

> The intent of qualitative researchers to promote a subjective research paradigm is a given. Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding. (Stake, 1995, p. 45)

The constructivist approach suggests that researchers cannot comprehend human action simply by taking the position of an outside observer who 'sees' only the physical manifestations of these acts. Rather, these researchers must understand what the actors mean by their actions from their own point of view. Constructivist-qualitative researchers " are on the inside, immersing themselves in the social contexts and minds of the participants […]" (Sciarra, 1999, p. 43). Meanings are intersubjective and partially constitutive of the practices to which they refer. This implies that, unlike in the natural science tradition, interpretations are most meaningfully constructed in light of the particular cases they are intended to represent (Moss, 1996).

If reality is constructed and the knower and the known are inseparable, as the constructivist-qualitative researchers hold, then the values of all the participants in the research are relevant (Merriam, 1998). On the other hand, if the world can be divided into parts and if the knower can stand outside of what is to be known, as positivistic researchers believe, than research can be 'value free' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). According to the constructivist paradigm, the researcher needs to consider which values – his own as well as those of the people being studied - are involved, and what implications these values hold for truthful findings. Rather than denying norms, personal interests and values, it requires an awareness of how these values influence research. The meaning of human action and interaction can only be adequately understood if the common-sense knowledge and interpretations of the actors are taken into account (Jorgensen, 1989; Seidel and Kelle, 1995).

What are the ways of finding out knowledge?

The third research paradigm question is: 'What are the ways of finding out knowledge?' This is usually called the methodological question. Methodology is a more practical branch of philosophy (especially of the philosophy of science) that deals with methods, systems, and rules for the conduct of inquiry. Another way to phrase the question is: 'How can we go about finding out things?'" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 83). If one assumes a scientific ontology and an objective epistemology, it would make sense to adopt a positivistic-quantitative methodology. On the other hand, having assumed a relativist ontology and interactive epistemology, the use of qualitative techniques would be more appropriate.

> Just as the response to the epistemological question depends on the response to the ontological question, so the response to the methodological question in turn depends on the other two. (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 88)

The constructivist-qualitative researcher elects "to use him-or her-self as well as other humans as the primary data-gathering instrument" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 39). Constructivist-qualitative researchers may utilize a variety of specialized non-mathematical techniques and make minimal, if any, use of quantitative techniques (Strauss, 1978). Qualitative research posits that the most powerful way to understand human beings is to watch, talk, listen and participate with them in their own natural settings.

The constructivist-qualitative researcher makes no attempt to manipulate, control, or eliminate variables, but accepts the complexity of the phenomenon as a whole. Constructivist-qualitative study never begins by seeking to establish a correlation among previously defined variables. The strategy is rather to spend sufficient time with the persons/setting to allow the defining characteristics to emerge from the events themselves and as those who participate in them perceive them (Rist, 1982). In contrast, the positivistic or quantitative approach to research looks past these words, actions and records to their statistical significance.

Constructivist-qualitative research places emphasis on understanding through looking closely at people's words, actions and records. "The strategic mandate to be holistic, inductive, and naturalistic means getting close to the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 1980, p. 43). The world of everyday life as viewed from the standpoint of insiders is the fundamental reality to be described by the construtivist-qualitative researcher (Jorgensen, 1989). Constructivist-qualitative researchers attempt to capture what people say and do, that is, the products of how people interpret their world (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

People everywhere learn their culture by observing other people, listening to them, and then making inferences. The ethnographer employs this same process of using what is seen and heard to infer what people know. In doing field work, ethnographers make cultural inferences from three sources: from what people say, the way people act, and from the artifacts people use. Hence, the importance of field techniques such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, detailed description, and field notes (Spradley, 1979; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

In contrast to studying behavior and interactions in the artificial setting of a laboratory, where the positivistic investigator attempts to control and selectively manipulate the environment, constructivist-qualitative research seeks to study people where they are and as they go about their normal routines (Rist, 1982). Thus, the process of data collection in naturalistic inquiry is located in any surrounding that allows the people to tell their own stories. It could be their work place, their homes, or any other appropriate location. Constructivist-qualitative research designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. Naturalistic inquiry replaces the fixed treatment/outcomes emphasis of the controlled experiment with a dynamic process-orientation (Patton, 1980).

Constructivist-qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing understandings on the research setting. Categories of analysis emerge from open-ended interviews and observations as the researcher comes to understand organizing patterns that exist in the world under empirical study. The researcher has to go out to listen and look at how people themselves perceive and interpret their world. Meaningful hypotheses can be established only after gathering data, that is, after establishing contact with the people in the field through interviewing or observing (Patton, 1980; Seidel and Kelle, 1995; Merriam, 1998).

How do people know reality?

Following the three paradigmatic assumptions of the qualitative research approach, one can introduce a cognitive question, which focuses on the way people know reality.

Positivistic and narrative-constructivist modes of thought

Bruner (1985, 1996) suggests that there are two broad fundamental ways of knowing and thinking in which human beings organize and manage their perception of the world: the positivistic (or in Bruner termnology the "paradigmatic" or "logico-scientific") and the narrative modes of thought. Each mode of knowledge and thought provides a system for ordering experience and constructing reality. Both provide ways of filtering the perceptual world and of organizing its representation in memory. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to favor one at the expense of the other fail to capture the rich ways in which people 'know' and describe events around them (Bruner, 1985).

The 'positivistic' mode is based on the search for universal statements of truth. This mode is primarily appropriate to the natural and physical sciences. The other fundamental way of perceiving and knowing about the world, according to Bruner, is the 'narrative' (which could also be termed 'constructivist' or 'interpretive') mode. The narrative-constructivist mode is based on the assumption that the complicated and rich phenomena of life and experience are better represented in stories or narratives (Lieblich et al., 1998). Both modes of knowledge and thought are legitimate perspectives on the world, and although different cultures regard them differently, no culture is without both of them (Bruner, 1996). The positivistic mode seems more adept for relating to physical 'things', while the narrative mode is generally more suited to our perception of people and their experience.

These ways of knowing and thinking differ radically in their procedures and empirical truths. The positivistic mode affirms by "appeal to formal verification procedures and empirical proof" (Bruner, 1985, p. 97). The narrative mode establishes "not truth but truth-likeness or verisimilitude" (Bruner, 1985, p. 97).

The positivistic mode of thought seeks explications that are context-free and universal, while the narrative mode seeks explications that are context-sensitive and particular. The positivistic mode is "centered around the narrow epistemological question of how to know the truth" (Bruner, 1985, p.98), while the narrative mode is centered "around the broader and more inclusive question of the meaning of experience" (Bruner, 1985, p.98). Narrative mode of thought is often said to be value-laden in contrast to value-free positivism. Given their very fundamental differences in approach and assumptions, there is no direct way in which a statement based in one paradigmatic mode can contradict or even corroborate statements derived from the other.

The positivistic mode of knowledge and thought, at its most developed, fulfills the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation. The primary operation of positivistic cognition is classifying a particular instance as belonging to a particular category or concept. Positivistic discourse develops toward pure expression of analytically and empirically verifiable propositions of the conventional type (Polkinghorne, 1995). The positivistic mode is based on conceptualization and the process by which categories are established, idealized and related one to the other to form a system. Its language is regulated by requirements of consistency and noncontradiction. The imaginative application of the positivistic mode leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis (Bruner, 1985, 1996).

The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads to believable stories, convincing drama, and credible historical accounts. "People use the narrative form as a kind of heuristic device to sort out the relevant facts and arrange them in some kind of logical order" (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 296). And when people "explain what they know, we often hear a story, because that is how reality appears to us" (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 296). Stories are the end product of a narrative way of knowing. People express all kinds of stories: verbal, written, or visual-representation (Gudmundsdottir, 1991). Stories or narratives are so prevalent in our culture that they can be said to create the reality which people inhabit. It is only in the narrative mode of knowing and thought that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture, as this is the only mode which is concerned with 'social meaning' (Bruner, 1996; Jovchlovitch and Bauer, 2000).

The structure of narrative

The words narrative, narration, and narrate have Latin root (Jovchlovitch and Bauer, 2000). Narrative refers to the structure, knowledge, and skills required to construct a story (Gudmondsdottir, 1996). "Story is a mode of knowing that captures in a special fashion the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs" (Carter, 1993, p. 6). The richness of human events and thought cannot be expressed

in definitions, statements of fact, or abstract propositions. It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story (Carter, 1993).

Narrative is a mode of knowledge which can accommodate ambiguity and dilemma that are very typical of plot and action. Plot is the narrative structure through which people perceive and understand the relationships amongst the events and choices in their lives. "Plots function to compose or configure events into a story by: (a) delimiting a temporal range which marks the beginning and end of the story, (b) providing criteria for the selection of events to be included in the story, (c) temporally ordering events into an unfolding movement culminating in a conclusion, and (d) clarifying or making explicit the meaning events have as contributors to the story as a unified whole" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7). Narrative knowledge focuses on the particular and special characteristics of each action.

> Narrative cognition configures the diverse elements of a particular action into a unified whole in which each element is connected to the central purpose of the action. […] Narrative reasoning does not reduce itself to rules and generalities across stories but maintains itself at the level of the specific episode. […] The cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to case instead of from case to generalization. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11)

Narrative discourse, because it is built around the vicissitudes of human intentions being acted out, uses the full range of speech acts as its keyboard: expressives, declaratives, and so forth (Bruner, 1985). Individuals relate experiences using a variety of narrative genres. Narratives have formal properties and each has a function. A 'good narrative' includes six common elements: an abstract (summary of the substance of the narrative), orientation (time, place, situation, participation), complicating action (sequence of events), evaluation (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator), resolution (what finally happened) and coda (returns the perspective to the present) (Riessman, 1993).

Narrative as human experience and meaning

Experiences themselves do not exist independently. We experience them as parts of a temporal whole, and they get their meaning from the totality of the whole to which they belong. We respond to them cognitively, but also emotionally and aesthetically. Thus, one almost never learns and/or experiences anything 'objectively'. Instead, people usually encode their experiences in narrative form and they characteristically use stories to explain and justify their thinking and actions. When we think of life as a whole, we tend to think narratively. Narrative gives a structured quality to experience (Clandinin, and Connelly, 2000; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; 1990, Gudmundsdottir, 1995).

In the course of daily life, people make sense of the world around them. They give it meaning and interact on the basis of these meanings (Jorgensen, 1989; Marble, 1997). Many researchers have identified and explored the use of narrative as a mode for communication more resonant with human experience than the traditional mode of communication that is used in positivistic-quantitative studies (Zeller, 1995; Lieblich et al. 1998). Narratives are interpretative tools that constitute a practical, but also highly selective, perspective with which we look at the world around us and give it purpose. Narratives help us to interpret the world (Gudmundsdottir, 1995). "Narrative functioning always involves interpretation and reinterpretation, the structuring of experience, and the act of telling someone something" (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 29).

We tell stories about ourselves that are historical, explanatory, and in some way foretelling of the future. The 'truth' of our stories is not the historical or scientific truth, but rather something which can be called "narrative truth" (Bruner, 1990, p. 111). "Narratives are not open to proof, and cannot simply be judged as true or false. They express the truth of a point of view, of a specific location in space and time" (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000). Our stories are much more than mere accounts of our lives - they are actually a critical medium by which we make sense of our experiences. Narratives are never straight copies of the world like photographic images. They are interpretation. Past experiences are not buried in the ground like archeological treasures waiting to be recovered and studied. Rather, the past is recreated through telling (Gudmondsdottir, 1995). "Essentially, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Grimmett and Mackinnon, 1992, p. 404).

Widdershoven (1993) argues that the relation between life and story is usually envisaged in one of the following two ways: On one hand life is seen as something that can be depicted in stories. On the other hand stories are regarded as ideals that that we try to live up to. Thus experience and story may be said to communicate with one another. Personal experiences not only influence our responses to context and opportunities, but also help to frame the search for specific personal development. The story tells us in a meaningful way what life itself is about. This implies that the meaning of life does not exist independent of the stories that are told about it. Thus the stories told about life in fact change it and give it more specific form (Widdershoven, 1993; Grimmet and Mackinnon, 1992). Life has meaning because it is lived according to a narrative script. We live our lives in such a way that we can tell stories about our experiences and actions. But "the relation between life and story is a hermeneutic circle: The story is based on the pre-understanding of life, and changes it into more fully developed understanding" (Widdershoven, 1993, p.5).

Narrative as human expression

Individuals become the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives (Riessman, 1993). This essentially human nature brings Connelly and Clandinin (1988, 1990) to argue that people are essentially story-telling animals, who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People are by nature storytellers and this is a quality of their human nature and not, say, of their art (Lieblich et al. 1998; Beatie, 1995). Like historians who tell of the past in stories, people tell their lives in stories. Telling stories about past events is a universal human activity, one of the first forms of discourse we learn as children (Riessman, 1993). People dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, learn, hate and love in narrative (Widdershoven, 1993).

Human life, social life, indeed all human interactions involve a process of constructing and reconstructing personal and social stories (Grimmet and Mackinnon, 1992). In our storied lives we think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures (Bruner,1985, 1990). Story is the landscape within which we live as human beings and within which we can be seen as making sense (Elbaz, 1991). This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit between the notion of story and our intuitive understanding of our life. It is an epistemological claim: That our life, in its own terms, is ordered by stories and can best be understood in this way (Carter, 1993). The underlying premise of the claim to the use of narrative in sociology, psychology and educational research is the conception of the self as a storyteller and the self as constructor of narratives about him/herself and about social life (Bruner, 1990).

> Stories are part of our identity and our culture. We create stories about ourselves that we communicate in various ways to our colleagues. This self-narrative enables us to construe who we are and where we are heading in our lives. (Gudmondsdottir, 1991, p. 207)

The question of personal identity is embedded in the unity of life, the coherence of one's life story, and an individual's choice to make one kind of unity rather than another in his or her life. Personal responsibility is involved in the plots we choose for our lives, however limited, limiting, imaginative, or expansive they may be. We can choose to live our lives according to predetermined plans and narratives, or we can construct our own plans and narrative and choose to tell and retell our stories of who we are, and what we are to be in them (Beatie, 1995).

Conclusion

This chapter introduces the assumptions of constructivist-qualitative research in comparison to those of positivistic-quantitative research. This chapter focuses on four fundamental questions, each dealing with another aspect of research

assumptions. These assumptions are interconnected in such a way that the answer given to any one question, influences how the others may be answered. These four questions are: The ontological question ("What is the nature of reality?"), the epistemological question ("What is the relationship of the knower to known?"), the methodological question ("What are the ways of finding out knowledge?") and the cognitive question regarding the nature of human knowledge and thought ("How do people know reality?").

The constructivist-qualitative ontology emphasizes the holistic understanding of phenomena and the importance of context in their interpretation. The constructivist-qualitative epistemology asserts that the knower and the known are co-existent and that people construct their knowledge through their experience in the world. Phenomena can only be understood from an insider's point of view, and the values of the participants are crucial for our interpretations. Accordingly, the meaning of the phenomenon is subjective, relative to the perspective in which it is constructed. In the constructivist-qualitative methodology the researchers are the primary research instrument and there is no attempt to manipulate or control findings using statistical instruments. Data is collected by field work in the natural setting. The categories of analysis emerge from the open-ended process of data collection without imposing preexisting understandings on them.

The constructivist-qualitative approach holds that human beings organize and manage their perception of the world through the stories they construct and tell. These human narratives give a structured quality to experience and are the way people make sense of the world around them. By telling a story about their life, people do not merely describe their lives but also change them. The constructivist-qualitative researcher invites the informants to tell their stories and focuses his/her research work on these authentic narratives.

CHAPTER 2

MULTIPLE CASE NARRATIVE AND COMPARABLE RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Researchers have identified numerous types of qualitative research. Strauss and Corbin, (1990) suggested the following research types: grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, life histories, and conversational analysis. Moss (1996), who uses the term "traditions" for the diverse types of qualitative research and their unique perspectives, specified ethnography, hermeneutics, phenomenology, critical theory, and postmodernism. Creswell (1998) proposed five traditions: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. Merriam (1985) categorized qualitative research traditions on the basis of their final reports and proposed three main types: case study, ethnography and grounded theory. Denzin and Lincoln (1994; 2000) in their first and second editions of "Handbook of Qualitative Research" distinguished many qualitative genres on the basis of their chronological emergence. Tesch (1990) lists over forty types of qualitative research. Further classifications can be found in others books and papers. Nonetheless, research strategies that allow for the investigation of multiple populations of dozens and more are not included in any of these lists.

There are, in fact, several qualitative methods for the investigation of tens and even hundreds of people, cases or events. One example is 'protocol analysis' which focuses on analyzing verbal protocols using the methods of content analysis. This method is mainly used in the field of cognitive psychology and analyzes "transcriptions that are derived from recordings of participants' speech while they are carrying out a task under thinking-aloud instructions" (Gilhooly and Green, 1996, p. 43). However, this method can be easily utilized for analyzing the protocols of interviews in fields other than cognitive psychology. Although protocol analysis deals with qualitative data, it follows the positivistic approach (Henwood, 1996). Another example is the Miles and Huberman (1994) source book "Qualitative Data Analysis" which cites numerous methods for doing qualitative research and analysis of qualitative data. While it is a very rich source of qualitative methods, its research approach is also primarily positivistic rather than constructivist (Henwood, 1996; Guba and Lincoln, 1998). An obvious example is survey study

which utilizes qualitative methods. However, as we will explain below, this type of study also commonly follows the positivistic approach.

Surveys are widely accepted as a means of gleaning information which will become the basis of policy decisions and research. Decision-makers in government, industry, politics and civil society organizations as well as designers of public opinion in all sectors are all avid survey-users. Survey research is used to describe aspects of society and to monitor changes in order to respond to them (Hoinville et al., 1977; Fowler, 1988). Surveys are also increasingly used in academic research and scholarship. While the place of survey research is well established in academia and among policy-makers, a method for survey research in the constructivist - qualitative tradition has not yet been elaborated.

Almost all researchers, qualitative and quantitative alike, regard surveys as a means of acquiring a quantitative or numerical description of some aspects of the population under study. This is the "conventional" survey research, which follows the positivistic research approach. (In this book we do not distinguish between "positivistic" and "postpositivistic" research approaches [see for example Guba and Lincoln, 1998] and both are regarded as "positivistic"). Consequently, all survey research uses quantitative techniques for data collection and analysis (Hoinville and Jowell, 1977; Fowler, 1988; Cohen and Manion, 1989). While the research community relies on several types of qualitative research as an alternative to the quantitative approach, the survey strategy has remained the exclusive domain of the positivistic- quantitative tradition.

In recent years, strong counter pressures against the hegemony of the positivistic-quantitative research approach have emerged, even among its adherents. Numerous problems that challenge the conventional approach have been raised, and issues such as context, meaning, applicability and others are part of this critique. Most of the responses to these paradigm challenges are still formulated within the assumptions of the positivistic research paradigm.

Several researchers have indeed accepted a small-scale qualitative research process as a basis for developing structured quantitative questionnaires. By means of preliminary qualitative work, they seek to identify the ranges of behavior and attitudes on issues they wish to explore; they thus avoid forcing the respondents' views into false or irrelevant structures. These researchers generally use two main methods of collecting data: in-depth interviews (which may be unstructured or semi-structured) and the focus group. Using the qualitative data thus gathered, researchers can identify the main issues in the sample, how they should be defined, the phraseology and concepts used by respondents, the variety of opinions on particular issues, the relevant dimensions of attitudes, tentative hypotheses about motivations underlying behavior and attitudes, and so on. Essentially, these researchers use the qualitative stage simply as a means of refining their questions

and of narrowing the parameters of their study; the main and "real" research is still considered the ensuing positivist-quantitative survey study.

Many quantitative researchers have come to recognize the considerable value of examining attitudes using qualitative methods, and these methods are used at times over and above their contribution to the design of the structured survey. These researchers acknowledge that a small-scale qualitative study of 50 or so participants, for instance, can give useful insight into the issues under inquiry (Hoinville, et al. 1977). Indeed qualitative methods play a role in some of the traditional surveys, even when there is no subsequent quantitative phase in mind. However, these researchers continue to adhere to the positivistic-quantitative assumptions, and their overall treatment of the data continues to rely on quantitative methods. Aside from the qualitative interview, they still use positivistic-quantitative methods such as stating predetermined research questions and using statistical analyses. Many of these researchers regard such research as being of the qualitative type or at least as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. As we will explain below, despite this usage of qualitative methods, we regard these types of research projects as variants of the positivistic-quantitative approach and not as research in the constructivist-qualitative tradition. In summary, despite the limited use of some qualitative methods within survey and quantitative studies, this field of research is fully under the hegemony of the positivistic-quantitative approach.

The connection between research assumptions and research methods

As discussed in Chapter 1, the constructivist-qualitative research approach and the quantitative-positivistic research approach are based on different assumptions which are not interchangeable (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). These assumptions are basic belief systems, which cannot be proven or tested, but which represent fundamental underlying positions. We choose a research approach according to our general perspective and worldview, and the methods we choose must fit these research assumptions (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Our assumptions shape the way we approach research questions, collect data, analyze the data and write the final report.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that the term "qualitative research" means different things in different contexts. Thus, they offer a generic definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. […] They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. […] This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Guba and Lincoln (1998) suggest a distinction between the use of the term "qualitative" as a description of types of methods, and its use in connoting a research paradigm. From their perspective, "both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm […]" (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p. 195). They discriminate between four qualitative research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism, and argue that their commitment is to constructivism as the preferred paradigm for qualitative research. We have adopted Guba and Lincoln's distinctions and have characterized the research approach presented in this book "constructivist-qualitative" in contrast to the "positivist-quantitative" approach. As mentioned above, this book does not relate to the differentiation between positivism and post-positivism, and will also not relate to the distinction between constructivsm and critical theory.

One of the more frequent criticisms of qualitative research and especially of narrative inquiry, even amongst its advocates, is that it focuses on a relatively small population in each research project. This small-scale focus derives from the nature of the constructivist-qualitative research approach. However, as useful as this is, we sometimes need to study larger populations if, perhaps, less deeply. This type of research has generally been under the hegemony of the positivistic-quantitative approach, and any kind of integration between quantitative and qualitative methods is usually based on positivistic-quantitative research assumptions. However, when considering any study, the question is not which is the better research approach, but rather what are our beliefs about the nature of the phenomenon under inquiry and of the research problems we wish to investigate. Does the phenomenon call for a quantitative-positivistic research approach or for a constructivist-qualitative approach? If a constructivist-qualitative approach is called for, we need an appropriate research strategy that can survey a relatively large population while, at the same time, allow for depth of expression and understanding. Multiple Case Narrative offers such an approach which also compensates for the weaknesses of qualitative research mentioned above.

Classifying types of qualitative research

In order to highlight the difference between the proposed Multiple Case Narrative and other research types which utilize qualitative methods of data collection – either based on constructivist or positivistic approaches – we introduce a classification of the current qualitative research varieties. As was discussed in the opening pages of this chapter, there are many different types of qualitative research, and there is some confusion about their different names. Part of the terms in use are indeed related to research varieties, but others are related more to research methods or types of final report. Sometimes the same term has a different meaning

in different research contexts. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) introduced "five phases that define the research process" (p. 19). On the basis of these five phases, we suggest a categorization of the terms used to represent the different types of qualitative research into four separate groups, each of which represents a different aspect and process of qualitative research. Almost all terms can belong to more than one category, in each case with a different meaning.

The first group of terms relates to the research approach. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a research approach is based on "a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 19). These research beliefs are the assumptions of the researcher and relate to ontological, epistemological, methodological and cognive issues. Focusing on the constructivist-qualitative approach, we can find in the literature terms such as qualitative research, ethnography, narrative inquiry, naturalistic inquiry, constructivist research, descriptive research, field study and interpretive study. These terms, when they relate to the question of approach, basically refer to almost the same research assumptions, mostly, the constructivist approach. Researchers might prefer to choose one term to emphasize the special nature of their inquiry. (For this reason, some even use terms like 'case study' or 'participant observation' which sound more like research strategies and methods than research approaches). In this book, we use the term 'constructivist-qualitative research' or 'constructivist-narrative' in reference to our research approach.

The second group of terms relates to the research strategy (sometimes also called research tradition, research variety, research type, or research genre). This group of terms relates to the operational design and construction of the research project. While in the case of research approach, a variety of terms sometimes represents almost the same assumptions, here every term represents a special kind of research strategy. In this group we can find terms like: single case study, collective (or multiple) case study, action research, anthropology, ethnography, biography, phenomenology, educational connoisseurship, life story, life history, grounded theory and qualitative evaluation. Most of the strategies listed here are indeed exclusively constructivist-qualitative research strategies. However, there are some, such as case study and qualitative evaluation, for instance, that can signify either a constructivist or a positivistic approach. The research strategy presented in this book is, of course, what we call 'Multiple Case Narrative'. Nonetheless, in the course of the book we relate to and discuss some other relevant strategies.

The third group of terms relates to the methods for collecting data and analyzing it. There are methods that are more appropriate to constructivist-qualitative research such as: participant-observation, in-depth interviews (sometimes also called non-structured or semi-structured interviews), focus group, and several types of analysis techniques for observations, interviews and documents. Qualitative researchers

may also use, to a limited extent, methods that are perhaps more appropriate to quantitative-positivistic research such as: pure observation, structured interviews, questionnaires or content analysis.

The fourth group of terms relates to the final report of the research. There are several types of qualitative reports such as: narrative description, ethnographic description, biography, single case report, collective case report and the phenomenological report. There are indeed some features common to all types of the final qualitative report: all are descriptive in their nature (some more thickly descriptive, others more conceptual) and all are contextually bounded. All are absolutely different from the formal, mathematically based system of description and explanation typical of the conventional quantitative research report.

The research assumptions of Multiple Case Narrative

Using the above criteria for identifying qualitative varieties, it must be noted that when constructivist-qualitative researchers use one or more of the quantitative methods they do not necessarily become positivistic-quantitative researchers, and may continue to adhere to the constructivist-qualitative research assumptions. The criterion for deciding whether the study is of a constructivist or positivistic nature is first and formost its research approach. What brings a researcher to adopt either the constructivist or the positivistic research approach with their respective research strategies, methods of collecting data and final report, is the researchers' conception of the phenomenon under inquiry and the questions they want to investigate. If the researchers believe that the phenomenon under inquiry is most suited to constructivist-qualitative assumptions, and if they want to study many single cases, they need to conduct a constructivist-qualitative alternative to the positivistic-quanititative research.

The Multiple Case Narrative is a qualitative research strategy which can deal with a large number of case narratives. Multiple Case Narrative, like the conventional-quantitative survey, is able to deal with numerous case narratives, even potentially (but not often in practice) with more than one hundred or several hundred cases. Aside from this characteristic, the Multiple Case Narrative is very different from the "conventional" survey. Throughout this book, we will emphasize those unique characteristics that stem from the constructivist-qualitative nature of this strategy.

The best way to introduce and describe the Multiple Case Narrative is by comparison to other research strategies of a similar nature: collective case study, case survey and meta-ethnography, as well as the traditional quantitative survey. The Multiple Case Narrative "borrows" elements from each of these methods and is in several respects quite similar to them. However, it is at the same time a unique strategy and is essentially very different from those strategies. We will start our

discussion with a description of each of the four strategies and then, by way of comparison, we will highlight the characteristics of the Multiple Case Narrative.

Collective Case Study

The single narrative is a special type of single case study, and it is the basic unit of the collective case study. In this type of study, the "cases" are individual narratives or units which share several common characteristics – a man or woman, a family, a tribe, a small business, a neighborhood, a community, an institution, a program, a collective, or a population (Huberman and Miles, 1994). The product of the collective case study is a thick holistic description (narrative). By its nature, the collective case study enables the achievement of a level of understanding and interpretation which is not possible through conventional experimental or survey design (Merriam, 1998).

Stake (1995) identifies two types of case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. In the former, we have an intrinsic interest in the individual case narrative, not because by studying it we learn about other individuals or about some general problem, but because we need to know more about that particular individual. With intrinsic case studies, there is little interest in generalizing to other examples or types of case narratives. The second type of case study, instrumental case studies, deal with a different situation. We have a research question, a need for a general understanding, and feel that we may gain insight into the question through studying particular case narratives. Case studies here are instrumental to accomplishing something other than an understanding of these particular case narratives. This is the paradox of case narrative: by studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal (Simons, 1996). Instrumental case studies aim at some kind of generalization and our choice of informants is based on their potential to be representative (Merriam and Simpson, 1984; Stake, 1995). Multiple Case Narrative is concerned mainly with the instrumental type of case study.

Collective case study presents and compares between several single case narratives. Collective case study may be designed with more concern for representation, although the representativeness of a small sample is sometimes difficult to defend. One of the main characteristics of the collective case study is that, although it deals with several case narratives and presents them collectively, each single case narrative is portrayed with its unique features and context. From this perspective one can say that collective case study enhances the research potential of the overall study without forgoing the advantages of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1984). The collective case study yields "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of several case studies and includes certain types of comparison between them. However, the collective case study is utilized for studying a limited number of case narratives. Multiple Case Narrative offers the

field of qualitative research a method for the investigation of a much larger number of case narratives.

Case Survey

Case survey is a research strategy which synthesizes the results of case studies previously reported upon. This strategy was developed as a means of bringing diverse case studies together within a common conceptual framework in order to enable cumulative findings (Firestone, 1993; Lucas, 1974; Yin and Heald, 1975). This method is also referred to as "the structured content analysis of cases", or "meta analysis" (Berger, 1983). This approach gives a great deal of attention to measuring and controlling case study findings (Larsson, 1993). The strength of this method lies in its capacity to integrate the findings of diverse case studies/ narratives. It is a flexible research method, in which many different types of case narratives can be brought together, and concepts that the original studies failed to address can be developed and considered (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The case survey strategy can be used as a secondary form of analysis when numerous relevant case studies are available (Yin, 1984).

The main limitation of isolated case narratives is that the insights gained cannot be aggregated in any systematic way. The case survey overcomes this problem by focusing on certain components of the case narratives while ignoring their specific contexts and integrating the individual narratives results using conventional statistics. The strong appeal of the case survey lies in its ability to transform qualitative evidence into quantitative statements. Because the case survey is based on more than one case narrative, it also affords the opportunity to generalize (Berger, 1983; Larsson, 1993: Schofield, 1989).

The researcher uses a questionnaire as the research analysis tool and reviews all case studies or narrative descriptions that have been found to be relevant to the research. The method requires the researcher to test the same set of questions against each case study. The various questions are 'closed' to permit easy quantification. The questions are based on the literature and the researcher's own theoretical perspectives (Berger, 1983). Investigators can select rigorous or loose criteria, depending on the nature of the investigation.

There are nonetheless clear limitations to the case survey method. The number of case narratives available that are relevant to any specific question of interest is generally limited. In addition, since the case survey relies on reports of narratives/ cases already completed and does not have access to information beyond these reports, data relevant to the survey questions may simply not be available for all of the cases/narratives in the survey. Likewise, the case survey method, with its focus on aggregating information, may not give sufficient attention to the unique factors of the individual case narrative. The questionnaire and coding procedures of

assigning numbers also simplify the complex phenomena under investigation (Yin, 1981). However, "coding simplification is a key issue in case survey methodology since it constitutes the bridge from ideograph richness to nomothetic generality" (Larsson, 1993, p. 1519).

Even generalization to other populations (which is perhaps the main reason for using the case survey method) may be problematic. The case survey is unlikely to produce results on which theoretical or statistical generalization may be based. The reason for this is that there is no way to determine the degree to which the existing case narratives are representative. Generalization is thus impeded because the selection of individual case narratives is beyond the control of the secondary analytical investigator but rather limited to studies that already have done by others (Berger, 1983; Yin, 1984). Some of these limitations of the case survey strategy relating to individual narratives are addressed by the Multiple Case Narrative.

Meta-Ethnography

Meta-ethnography is similar to the case survey strategy in that it, too, aims to synthesize already completed studies. Noblit and Hare (1988), proponents of the meta-ethnography strategy, argue that case survey and other efforts at aggregation tend to ignore the interpretive nature of qualitative research and thus to miss much of what is most important in each study. While the case survey primarily uses quantitative methods to synthesize findings from case studies, meta-ethnography applies qualitative methods to these studies in order to arrive at interpretive, rather than aggregative, findings.

Meta-ethnography takes to task one of the main limitations of the case survey: the translation of data in narrative form into quantitative data. Meta-ethnography continues to constitute qualitative research and preserves, as much as possible, the narrative-interpretive nature of the original qualitative studies. Meta-ethnography is driven by the desire to construct broad interpretive explanations. It is the translation of the interpretations of one study into the interpretive frames of another. The synthesis of qualitative research should be as interpretive as any single case narrative account. Narratives on similar topics can be seen as directly comparable or in unison suggesting a new line of argument. This process includes "a focus on and a listing of the concepts, themes, and metaphors that the author of each study utilizes. The meta-ethnographer lists and organizes these themes and then attempts to relate them to one another" (Schofield, 1989, p. 225).

Many of the limitations of the case survey are still not resolved by meta-ethnography. For example, the number of available studies that are relevant to the specific research questions of interest is beyond the control of a secondary investigator and, therefore, meta-ethnography is unlikely to arrive at findings solid enough to support generalizations. Furthermore, as a process of secondary analysis,

meta-ethnography, like case survey, is one step removed from the original "raw material" which may have provided important information and insights accessible only to a primary researcher. These and other limitations constitute the challenge faced by the Multiple Case Narrative.

Multiple Case Narrative

The Multiple Case Narrative is a research methodology used by researchers to collect data from a large number of people as part of the same study.

> Researchers who are primarily interested in comparing cases and want a more systematic approach [...] often use methods that look more like survey research and appear to rely on the sample-to-population argumentation to generalize. These studies pull together information on a wide variety of cases, rate the cases in terms of "variables," and then look at the association among the variables using displays or even statistics. (Firestone, 1993, p. 20)

This associational approach thus helps the researcher to identify broad patterns across a wide variety of case narratives.

Researchers tend to favor one of two methods of gathering data, either the nomothetic survey strategy, which emphasizes quantitative analysis of a few variables from a large sample of cases; or the ideographic case study strategy, which focuses primarily on the qualitative, multi-aspect, in-depth study of one or a few cases. Multiple Case Narrative bridges the gap between nomothetic and ideographic case studies. The Multiple Case Narrative combines the respective benefits of generalizable, cross sectional analysis and in-depth, process analysis. Thus, Multiple Case Narrative has the potential to overcome the weakness of generalizing to population immanent to single and collective case narratives. At the same time, the Multiple Case Narrative provides more in-depth analysis of the phenomena than is provided by conventional-questionnaire surveys and other quantitative research types.

Collective case study is a primary research process while the case survey and meta-ethnography are secondary research processes. Both of the above kinds of research processes are limited in their claims to provide bases for generalization. Collective case study, by nature, is limited by the number of case narratives it can encompass. Case survey and meta-ethnography, which deal with many cases, are limited because the amount of available research which is relevant to the specific research questions of interest is beyond the control of a secondary investigator. While collective case study focuses on the original characteristics of the cases studied, the case survey and meta-ethnography suffer from their distance from the primary data.

The Multiple Case Narrative seeks to address the limitations and strengths of the above research strategies. Like collective case study, this strategy uses primary-

raw data and engages in primary research. However, unlike collective case study, it may include a great number of case narratives as part of the same research. Even though it focuses on many case narratives, it is unlike the case survey in that it preserves its narrative-qualitative nature. Yet it affords many options for research generalization. In Figure 2.1 (p. 26) we highlight the commonalities and differences of the four types of research strategies discussed above. The main purpose of this comparison is to display the characteristics of the Multiple Case Narrative and to emphasize its relationship to the limitations and strengths of the other case research strategies. As is shown in Figure 2.1, Multiple Case Narrative, like collective case study, includes the main components of qualitative research: data collection (case survey and meta-ethnography use research already completed), and analysis of the "raw" data (case survey and meta-ethnography analyze reports of completed case studies). Like collective case study and meta-ethnography, Multiple Case Narrative uses the qualitative approach in all stages of the research, including the stage of comparison between many case naratives in survey manner (case survey uses positivistic-quantitative techniques for comparison between the cases).

It seems that the claim for generalization (in the notions of constructivist-qualitative research approach) is the strongest advantage of the Multiple Case Narrative compared to the other case study strategies mention above. The Multiple Case Narrative potentially allows for generalization, not just case to case and analytical generalization, as in single and collective case narratives, but also generalization to a population, which is generally afforded only by the positivistic-quantitative research approach. The strength of this associational approach is that by including large numbers of case narratives and emphasizing broad cross-narrative patterns, the researcher is protected from the idiosyncrasies that may appear in a single case narrative. Because case naratives lose their individual identity, however, case to case generalization may become problematic and cannot be easily applied. In the case of the Multiple Case Narrative, we cannot speak of generalization in the same way as in positivistic-quantitative research. We need to think of a special orientation for qualitative generalization (Stake, 1995; 2000; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This issue will be discussed broadly in Chapter 13.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Multiple Case Narrative is to collect qualitative data from multiple people as part of one research project. The Multiple Case Narrative, like the conventional-quantitative survey, is able to deal with a large number of case narratives. At the same time, the Multiple Case Narrative provides more in-depth analysis of the phenomena than is provided by conventional-questionnaire surveys and other quantitative research types. Even though it focuses on many case

Figure 2.1: comparison between the four types of case study research

	Collective case study	Case survey	Meta-ethnography	Multiple Case Narrative
The research approach	**Inductive-interpretive**	**Deductive-Quantitative**	**Inductive-interpretive**	**Inductive-interpretive**
Type of data	Use of **primary "raw"** data	Use of **secondary-interpretive** data	Use of **secondary-interpretive** data	Use of **primary "raw"** data
Varieties of data	Variety of **triangulation** data: observations, interviews and documents	**Descriptions and conclusions** taken from final research reports	**Descriptions and conclusions** taken from final research reports	Mainly **interviews**. Sometimes also **observations and documents**.
Procedure of data collection	Use of **qualitative methods** for data collection	Use of **data already collected**	Use of **data already collected**	Use of **qualitative methods** for data collection
Sample	Based of **sample of selected "new" informants**	Based of **sample of existing studies**	Based on **sample of existing studies**	Based of **purposeful sample of selected "new" informants**
Case context and identity	Every single case **preserves** its context and identity	Every single case **loses** its unique context and identity	**Dependent** on the number of cases	Every single case preserves its context and identity **in general**
Methods of data analysis	**Qualitative**-based methods	**Quantitative**-based methods	**Qualitative**-based methods	**Qualitative**-based methods
Representation of cases in the final report	**Combination of single and collective** case representation	**Statistical** representation of cross-elements	**Dependent** on the number of cases	**Narrative cross-case** representation
Claim to generalization	**Case to case** and **analytic qualitative** generalization	Formal generalization to population (or sites)	**Dependent** on the number of cases	Qualitative generalization to **population, analytic** and sometimes **case to case** generalization
Number of cases	From one to not more than ten	From ten to several tens to hundred and several hundreds	From **two to several tens**	From ten to several tens to hundred and several hundreds

narratives, the Multiple Case Narrative preserves its narrative-qualitative nature and produces narrative-qualitative findings.

The next chapters will deal systematically with all aspects and methods of the Multiple Case Narrative: its approach, the process of gathering and presenting data, analyzing data, writing the final report and the issues of generalization, validity and reliability. As mentioned, the Multiple Case Narrative is quite close in many respects to single and collective case study. Therefore, despite our focus on the Multiple Case Narrative, many of the descriptions, explanations and suggestions in this book are also useful in single and collective case study and in other qualitative research varieties.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DESIGN

The Multiple Case Narrative, like other strategies of qualitative research, starts with the process of defining the theoretical assumptions of the research. These theoretical assumptions furnish the conceptual perspectives which guide the researchers in designing their study.

Theoretical assumptions and conceptual perspectives

Theories provide a perspective, a way of seeing, or an interpretation aimed at understanding a phenomenon. Good theory, Glaser (1978) suggests, has categories that fit (or have come to fit) the data; is relevant to the core of what is going on; can be used to explain, predict, and interpret what is going on; and is modifiable. "It can provide the necessary direction and organizing framework through which to bring together the different concepts used in our analysis" (Dey, 1993, p. 51).

> A theory explicates a phenomena specifies concepts which categorize the relevant phenomena, explains relationship between concepts and provides a framework for making predictions. (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1164)

Strauss and Corbin (1994) define a theory as a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts. According to Jorgensen (1989) "a 'theory' may be defined as a set of concepts and generalizations. Theories provide a perspective, a way of seeing, or an interpretation aimed at understanding some phenomenon" (p. 16). Seidel and Kelle (1995) suggest that theory should be understood as (partly implicit) conceptual networks that provide us with particular 'lenses' for the perception and interpretation of the empirical world. Fetterman (1989) identified the function of theory in research as follows:

> Theory is a guide to practice; no study, ethnographic or otherwise, can be conducted without an underlying theory or model. Whether it is an explicit anthropological theory or an implicit personal model about how things work, the researcher's theoretical approach helps define the problem and how to tackle it. (Fetterman, 1989, p. 15)

Qualitative research is often seen by its critics as deficient in theoretical elements.

> Much qualitative work has been criticized for being merely descriptive, for being limited to 'how' rather than including 'why' questions. But these distinctions are not as clear-cut as they might seem. (Woods, 1996, p. 67)

The descriptive nature of narrative research in no way precludes its foundation in theoretical or conceptual premises. The narrative researcher does not begin empty-handed; his/her mind is not a *tabula rasa*. Researchers always bring some theoretical preconceptions with them. The researcher inevitably interprets what she or he finds by means of theoretical frameworks. Indeed, the researcher's very choice of particular data as relevant for interpretation stems from specific theoretical premises. These theoretical presumptions are grounded in earlier personal and professional experience, previous investigations, reading and even from existing prejudice. The literature the researchers have read (including theory, research and documents) is a significant source from which they develop a theoretical conception (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 1995). We use the term 'conceptual perspective' for the theoretical conception of the researchers.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) championed against taking theoretical frameworks developed in other contexts and force-fitting the phenomena under investigation into their matrices. Nonetheless, researchers always have theories; they walk into the research arena with theories about human behavior, about the way society works, about the world of their informants, about the nature of human narratives, and so on. Some of their theoretical outlooks are explicit, but many of them are implicit; some are informed, and others are very idiosyncratic (Seidman, 1991). Informants themselves also have theories, although not necessarily consistent or explicit ones. Consequently, it is not enough to desist from force-fitting an external theory onto the research, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest. It is also necessary to check ourselves, whether we as researchers are forcing our implicit theories onto the phenomena under examination.

> Qualitative researchers do have a set of assumptions, criteria, decision rules and operations for working with data to decide when a given finding is established and meaningful. The problem is that these crucial underpinnings of analysis remain mostly implicit, explained only allusively. […] We need to make explicit the procedures and thought processes that qualitative researchers actually use in their work. (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 22)

Creswell (1998) differentiated between five qualitative research strategies (or "traditions" in his words) according to the extent to which they use a-priori theories to guide their investigations. He located these at different points on a continuum representing the extent to which theory plays a role before the investigator poses questions and collects data, or after data collection and question-posing. On this

continuum, for instance, he placed phenomenology and ethnography as strategies that use theory prior to asking questions and gathering data. Phenomenologists usually make a-priori theoretical decisions when examining the meaning of experiences for individuals. Thus the researcher begins his research with a ready philosophical framework, which provides guidelines for his research. Ethnographers bring a strong cultural lens to their study. Although this lens shapes their initial observations and questions in the field, it may be moderated and changed during fieldwork. In Creswell's scheme, case study and grounded theory research are located closer towards the "after" end on the continuum. In these strategies, researchers relate to the theory after they pose questions and collect data.

When we select data for the purpose of describing and interpreting events and experiences, our selection is made on a specific basis. Implicitly perhaps more than explicitly, we use our own and others' interpretive judgments to verify and evaluate activities (Peshkin, 1993). These, however, are not 'hypotheses' in the ordinary sense. Rather, they may be better understood as conceptual networks that provide us with particular frameworks which orient our inquiry into the phenomenon. It is preferrable "to address these conceptual networks as perspectives rather than as 'hypotheses' or 'theories'" (Seidel and Kelle, 1995, p. 56).

> Typically, the qualitative researcher arrives on the scene with considerable theoretical baggage but very little idea of what will happen next. Using theory, common sense, and any resources at hand, the researcher attempts first, to survive in the field situation, and second, to work him - or herself into a position where both observation and interviewing of locals will be possible. (Kirk and Miller 1986, p. 30)

The narrative researcher begins the research with an open mind, but not an empty head. Before asking the first question, he/she "begins with a problem, a theory or model, a research design, specific data collection techniques, tools for analysis, and a specific writing style" (Fetterman, 1989, p.11). These help the researcher to select relevant phenomena and informants, (and, of course, different researchers will select different phenomena and informants). Charmaz (1990) argues that researchers "bring to their studies the general perspectives of their disciplines, their own philosophical, theoretical, substantive, and methodological proclivities, their particular research interests, and their biographies. They do not bring, however, a set of finely-honed preconceived concepts and categories to apply automatically" (p. 1170). Accordingly, data collection and analysis must start with a framework that is well grounded in a theoretical or conceptual scheme. However, theoretical bases for research often blind rather than guide researchers making their way through the maze of data in the field. "When theory is no longer a guide, it is no longer useful; when the data do not fit the theory, it is time to look for a new theory" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 18).

The main question is not whether researchers use theory before or after they pose questions and collect data. As we have outlined, every researcher, implicitly or explicitly, brings to the field of research some kind of conceptual perspectives. The question is, rather, whether this conceptual framework is amenable to modification in light of findings or not. Since we believe that one of the basic characteristics of narrative research is its constructed character, we prefer to formulate the above question thus: to what extent are the a-priori theories within which we operate changeable, and is the researcher indeed open-minded? We suggest that Multiple Case Narrative researchers should be conscious of their a-priori conceptual perspectives and open-minded so as to be able to examine them and change them during the long process of the research.

All conceptual perspectives, whether or not they have the features or status of theory, are always temporal and provisional. They are never established indefinitely. Their very nature must allow for endless elaboration (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). These perspectives help to focus the researchers in deciding whether to retain information, for example, informants' anecdotal narratives (Van Manen, 1990), and to analyze them further, or to discard them as irrelevant. The narrative researcher begins the inquiry with a particular focus and direction in mind, but must always be willing to alter these if new information makes it appropriate to do so (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

The issue is not whether or not to use existing conceptual perspectives, but, rather, how to use them. The problem is to find a focus, without committing ourselves prematurely to a particular perspective and therby foreclosing options for our data collection and analysis. It is necessary not to let our assumptions blind the evidence of our data. The danger lies not in having conceptual perspectives but in not being aware of them. Before we begin to collect data and analyze it, we need to be cognizant of our pre-conceived perspectives and their implications for the course of our data collection and analysis. Great care must be exercised to be certain that the theory is indeed suited for the now-to-be-investigated context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Strauss and Corbin (1990) put it in this way:

> Each of us brings to the analysis of data our biases, assumptions, patterns of thinking, and knowledge gained from experience and reading. These can block our seeing what is significant in the data, or prevent us from moving from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis. (p. 95)

Every research project usually begins with writing a tentative literature survey. This literature survey actually reflects the researcher's conceptual perspective. Writing a review of literature helps the researcher to clarify the conceptual perspective of the research both for him/herself as well as for colleagues. However, since the conceptual perspective in qualitative research is in a permanent process of change in the light of new data and new ideas, the review of literature should

always be updated. This is like the process of the periodic optometric examination. The optometrist makes use of different lenses in a process of trial and error until he/she finds the appropriate ones. The same is true for researchers as they continually change and improve their view and review of the relevant literature. An appropriate way to monitor one's conceptual perspective is by writing memo notes as part of the process of clarifying one's conceptual perspective (This issue will be discussed in chapter 6). The final literature review reflects the researchers' advanced conceptual perspective and helps the reader understand the research orientation and to read the final findings through these lenses.

Research focus and design

Research starts with an interest in a particular area and/or stories. The researcher begins with the identification of a problem or topic of interest. How the researcher interprets and defines the problem usually reflects her or his research orientation. The research problems are a display of the focus of the study. Researchers design their studies according to the research problems they seek to address. Determining the focus of the inquiry in the preliminary stages of the research fulfills two major purposes. First, such focusing establishes the conceptual boundaries for the study. Second, focusing helps the researcher to make decisions on where and how to gather data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

> Perhaps the most difficult task of the researcher is to design good questions, research questions, that will direct the looking and the thinking enough and not too much. The design of all research requires conceptual organization, ideas to express needed understanding, conceptual bridges from what is already known, cognitive structures to guide data gathering, and outlines for presenting interpretations to others. (Stake, 1995, p. 15)

In narrative research, problems for research most often emerge from the real world. These problems are raised from real stories, observations, dilemmas and questions and are combined with preliminary conceptual perspectives. They are not stated as hypotheses derived from theory, like in positivistic-quantitative research. The researcher may use concepts developed by previous researchers and may formulate problems in ways similar to those used in previous research (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Sometimes the problems are defined by the research's sponsor; sometimes they simply emerge along the way. But usually they have to be dug out and worked over. Stake (1995) argues that the best research questions evolve during the course of the study.

The focus of the Multiple Case Narrative is not simply to relate to a specific issue, but to help identify in which site or population this particular issue is present. Researchers may ask how, where and with whom the particular phenomenon exists (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The focus of narrative research questions is not

the discovery of new elements, as is the case in a natural science study, but rather to heighten awareness and clarify our understanding of phenomena and experiences (Creswell, 1998).

Narrative studies and positivistic-quantitative investigation can have similar phases of research: presenting a problem, asking questions, collecting data which address the questions, analyzing the data, and answering the questions. Indeed, the external analogies are quite striking. Nonetheless the process of each is very different. In narrative research, like other constructivist-qualitative types, we start with preliminary considerations in mind, generally a problem or a research issue which we would like to address. To understand these issues we ask open-ended questions, listen to the participants we are studying, and once more re-shape the questions. Our focus changes during the process of research to reflect our increased understanding of the problem.

While the narrative researcher starts out with a focus and a set of research questions, as does the positivist-quantitative researcher, during the course of the study, the focus may very well change as may the procedures of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Narrative research does not necessarily proceed with a linear logic, from review of literature to the definition of a problem, to the location of an appropriate setting for study. The narrative approach to research demands flexibility in the overall research design so that the narrators (informants) selected can respond to increasingly refined research questions. In narrative research, the general research questions (or focus), relevant literature, research location, informants, and research design are all interrelated, each one being dependent on the other (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Jorgensen, 1989).

Research questions

The main purposes of using the narrative research approach are to describe and explain phenomena narrated by the participants, and to develop theory regarding these phenomena. Description, conceptual explanation and theory emerge from the inquiry; they are not a-priori givens (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). We need a research question that will guide us in our study but which will, at the same time, give us the flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth. While the initial question starts out broadly-defined, it becomes progressively narrowed and more focused during the research process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The Multiple Case Narrative often takes the research in unexpected directions, so too much commitment to a particular course of study in advance may be problematic.

Qualitative researchers differ regarding the extent to which they seek to have their research questions strictly identified in the first stages of their research. In conducting a Multiple Case Narrative, the researcher often begins the study with unclear or vague conceptions as to what could be the focus of the research.

> The investigator usually has a research question or general direction that leads to decisions regarding the selection of interviewees or tellers, as well as the procedures for obtaining the story. However, in narrative studies, there are usually no a-priori hypotheses. The specific directions of the study usually emerge from reading the collected material, and hypotheses then may be generated from it. (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 10)

Most likely, the relevant concepts and questions will be developed during the research process; research proposals can thus only suggest possible themes and foci (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Sometimes, the researcher uses a pilot study to clarify the possible directions and questions of the research (This issue will be expanded in this chapter).

The initial research questions direct the researchers in their first steps of gathering data. After a reasonably short stage of interviewing and observation, the initial research questions should be reevaluated. The researchers may ask themselves: Did the initial research questions lead to relevant materials? Were they relevant from the insiders' perspectives? Have additional research questions emerged from the data? If the researchers are unable to provide affirmative and substantive answers to these questions, more than likely the questions will need to be reformulated. As what is being studied becomes more focused, it is appropriate to formulate the questions with key concepts for study; questions which also specify how these concepts are pertinent (Jorgensen, 1989). In the process of formulating and re-formulating questions, the researchers examine etic and emic issues as key concepts for the research questions in a process explained by Stake:

> Without previous experience with the case [there] are etic issues brought in by the researcher from the outside. Etic issues are the researcher's issues, sometime the issues of a larger research community, colleagues and writers. […] the issue statements may not fit the case circumstances well and need repair. Issues evolve. And emic issues emerge. These are the issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case. These are issues from the inside. Ethnographers traditionally have taken great satisfaction in developing emic issues, departing in the field from the conventional views as to what is important, but ultimately relating the emic to the etic issues of their discipline. (Stake, 1995, p. 20)

As stated above, there should be a connection between the review of literature and defining the questions. This does not mean that the literature is the basis for defining the questions, as is the case with the positivistic-quantitative research approach. In narrative research, the relationship between the literature and the questions is more dynamic and less linear. A review of literature is only a small part of the process of defining a problem for narrative research, but nevertheless there should be some relationship between the literature reviewed and the questions posed. It is advisable to connect the research questions to the theoretical assumptions

by writing a short digest of the assumptions which sustain the questions (or which sustain each of the core questions). These theoretical assumptions should be formulated in terms taken from the review of the literature. This procedure helps the researcher (and probably, later on, helps colleagues and readers) to identify the relationship between the review of literature and the research perspectives and questions. As the questions change and are refined, so should the survey of relevant literature be adapted and clarified (Jorgensen, 1989).

Narrative research questions do not entail statements about relationships between dependent and independent variables (as is common in positivistic-quantitative studies) because we are not testing this kind of hypothesis. Rather, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the research question "is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied. It tells you what you specifically what to focus on and what you want to know about this subject" (p. 38).

> Research questions, then, are those questions to which you as researcher really want to know the answer, and in that sense they are the formal expression of your intellectual puzzle. Although you will formulate them as questions, you may not expect a straightforward answer so much as an opening up of avenues of enquiry to which you will be able to apply analytical reasoning. (Mason, 1996, p. 16)

Some researchers find it useful to start with writing out a set of 10 or 20 prospective questions. These substantive questions are posed while negotiating the study, in early contacts with the cases, or from experience or relevant literature and are indications of what, in other cases, has been found to be deeply puzzling or problematic. Soon the list will be pared down to a few questions, perhaps only two or three, which help structure the observations, interviews, and document reviews (Stake, 1995).

Types of research questions

Yin (1984) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) have suggested three types of qualitative research questions: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory questions. Following their distinctions, we suggest a variation of these three types of research questions for use in the Multiple Case Narrative: exploratory questions, first order questions, and second order questions. These classifications are very effective in clarifying the focus of the Multiple Case Narrative.

1. Exploratory questions:

   Exploratory questions are suitable for uncovering important variables and generating assumptions for further research. Questions of this type are more appropriate when little is known or understood about the phenomena or people being studied, in pilot case studies, or in the first stages of the research.

Exploratory questions precede the two other types of questions, which can be identified later, after the research focus becomes clearer. Examples of exploratory type research questions are: "What is happening in this social program? What are the salient themes, patterns, categories in participants' meaning structures? How are these patterns linked with one another?" (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 78).

2. First order questions:

   All questions that focus on information which has been gathered directly from the informants, may be identified as first order questions because they are based directly on the actual stories, descriptions and explanations of the informants. In the narrative research approach, our interest is in the phenomenon as it is seen, told, described and explained by the informants themselves. Accordingly, first order questions are characterized by their focus on information collected from the informants. Based on the assumption that every narrative description is interpretive in its nature (Geertz, 1973), the revealed descriptions are products of the perspectives of the insider informants as understood and interpreted by the researcher.

   First order questions can be focused on gathering simple descriptive information or more complicated information such as interpersonal or special relationships, and even explanations of cause and effect. Examples of these kinds of questions are: What are the teachers' conceptions of their role? What are the citizens' attitudes toward the government's economic policy? What patterns of attitudes are found among students towards their future army service? These types of questions focus the researchers' attention on the information offered directly by the informants and challenge the researchers to get as close as possible to the world of the informants and to the way in which they see their own world.

   The Multiple Case Narrative, in contrast to most of the other qualitative research strategies, investigates relatively many informants in one study. Therefore the researcher spends a relatively small amount of time meeting and talking with each of the informants and collecting information from them. Nevertheless, much information can be gleaned from one or two in-depth interviews. This information may be simple description or complex explanations of cause and effect. In Multiple Case Narrative, the data is collected from many informants and our descriptive and explanatory picture can be very broad as well as deep. We define first order questions as the primary questions of the Multiple Case Narrative, and these are sometimes the only types of questions utilized in this research strategy.

3. Second order questions:

   Second order questions are questions that focus on knowledge that we do

not gather directly and completely from the informants, either because it is tacit knowledge or because it did not arise during the interviews or in other informants' stories. As mentioned, first order questions are based on information which has been gathered directly from the informants (and, as we will explain in the next chapter, we call such data 'primary data'). In contrast, second order questions are based both on primary sources of information and on information gathered through observation and documentation connected to the informants (which we call 'secondary sources of data'). Second order questions are based on informants' disjointed anecdoteal narratives, and/or data that are expressed more in the informants' behavior than by their words. Often, second order questions address issues in the realm of tacit understanding; information which is gleaned in a less direct manner (Shkedi, 2004).

The arena of knowledge which second order questions address is tapped through connections the researcher makes between different portions and aspects of the informants' stories. We do it by connecting data which is gathered directly from the informants (primary sources of data) with data we have gathered about the informants through observation and documentation, without their direct descriptive and explanatory stories (secondary sources of data). An example of this type of question is: What is the connection between youth identities and their attitudes toward school regulations? This second order question is based on two clusters of primary sources of data gathered from the youth informants on two subjects: their identities and their attitudes toward school regulations. (The procedure of second order analysis will be discussed extensively in chapter 11).

Notes from the research field / Box 3.1

Types of research questions

Examples of first order and second order questions and sub-questions taken from a Multiple Case Narrative focusing on teachers' attitudes toward a curriculum teachers' guide.

Questions 1-4 (including the sub-questions) are first order questions:

1. To what extent do teachers use teachers' guides and to what extent do they feel that they need them?

1a. Do teachers use the teachers' guide?

1b. Do teachers feel that they need the teachers' guide?

2. What qualities lead teachers to characterize a teachers' guide as effective?

2a. What is a good guide in the eyes of the teachers?

2b. Do guides allow the teachers to adapt material to their particular students and situations?

3. What is the image of the curriculum author in the eyes of teachers?

3a. Are the authors perceived by the teachers as knowing the world of teaching?
3b. Do the authors, in the teachers' view, relate to teachers as knowledgeable and professional?
3c. Do the teachers believe that the authors expect them to implement their instructions faithfully and without modification?
4. What are teachers' attitudes to teachers' guides, and how do they use the guides?
4a. Are the teachers interested in the intentions of the curriculum authors as expressed or implied in the guide?
4b. Do teachers tend to accept the instructions of the guide and to be faithful to them in implementation?
4c. Can teachers get along using the textbook and its activities, without reference to the teachers' guide?
4d. Do the teachers use the teachers' guide and curriculum as resources for learning new educational approaches?

Question 5 is a second order question (which is based on the first order questions):
5. What are the teachers' approaches towards the process of curriculum development?

[taken from: Shkedi (1995)]

Question 1-4, including the sub-questions, are first order questions based on primary sources of information (mainly interviews) taken from the informants (the teachers). Question 5, which is a second order question, calls for second order analysis (an issue which will be discussed in chapter 11). The teachers (in the above example) do not talk in global terms about their approaches towards the process of curriculum development. The researcher bases his analysis on information teachers have offered in response to the separate first order questions and connects all of this information to form a grand view, a coherent story (Mishler, 1986), from which teachers' approaches may be deduced. As stated earlier, the research questions are changeable during the course of the study. The focus of the study becomes clearer during the phases of collecting and analyzing the data and reading the relevant literature. While this is true in relation to any type of question, it is all the more so in relation to second order questions. Often, the researchers cannot begin to consider the second order questions until they have obtained responses to the first order questions.

Pilot study for defining the focus of the research

According to Kirk and Miller (1986) there are four phases of qualitative research: planning, collecting data, analysis and reporting. This breakdown gives an important place to the stage of planning, as the opening phase of any study. Sometimes the researchers do not know enough in order to determine what can or should be the focus of the research. They have general points of interest, they may even have access to the relevant literature, but they are not yet certain about the focus of the

study, and have difficulties in articulating good research questions. Under such circumstances, a pilot study is an important tool for helping researchers plan their studies. The pilot study directs the researcher down as yet unclear paths. Conducting a pilot study is very useful when we need to submit a proposal to an academic committee or to a funding agency.

Every research project is built on prior knowledge. This knowledge is based originally on personal experience and knowledge or on the relevant literature. Sometimes there is too wide a gap between what is already known and what we seek to know. This gap hampers the researchers in directing their study. The pilot study functions as a means of bridging this gap. It can clarify the focus of the study and illuminate the potential issues the study could address. The pilot phase helps the researchers to focus their proposal and may even direct them to new bodies of relevant literature.

Through the pilot study, the researcher can come to grips with some of the practical aspects of collecting data. The pilot allows the researcher to highlight the different elements of the observation and interview techniques and to clarify which are appropriate and which are problematic. The pilot study can also contribute to decisions about what, why, how, who, when and where to interview and/or to observe (Seidman, 1991). (Data collection will be discussed in chapters 4 and 5).

There are several ways to carry out a pilot study in Multiple Case Narrative. The most effective way is perhaps to conduct about 3 to 5 pilot case narratives from a pool of between 20 to 50 cases in the intended study that is to deal with about 10% of the cases in the larger intended study. The data-collection phase of the pilot study should be similar to the data-collection procedure that is being considered for the entire study. If our plan is to base the study, for instance, on one in-depth interview for each case, the pilot study should do the same. During the phases of gathering data and analyzing it in the course of the pilot study, the researcher is able to examine whether the anecdotal narratives that were collected from one interview can be rich enough for the purpose of the larger study. On this basis, the researcher can decide to expand (or perhaps to reduce) the extent of data collected for each case narrative.

While we proposed that the procedure for data collection should be very similar to what we had planned to do in the whole research, we suggest using a simpler procedure for analysis in the pilot study. As will be explained in chapters 6-11, the procedure for analyzing data in the Multiple Case Narrative is very strict and quite complicated. It entails several stages, demands diligence and is not a short process at all. The limited purpose of the pilot study allows us to restrict ourselves to the use of reflective analysis. This type of analysis is based on our general impressions and thoughts. Through this process we are able to get a picture of the potential of our larger study. The researcher can examine whether the data that was collected

from each informant in the pilot study is rich enough for the purpose of the broader study. By analyzing the pilot case narratives, the researcher can also clarify the focus of the main study. In the course of the larger study, the researcher can utilize the data gathered for the pilot study and re-analyze it in accordance with the analysis procedure of the whole research.

Morgan (1988) suggests using focus groups as a preliminary data collection technique in pilot studies. If the researcher is relatively unfamiliar with the subject at hand or if there are issues of language which pose a problem, then it would be advisable to hold a group discussion with several informants focusing on the proposed subject prior to departure for the field of research. The pilot focus group can be a substitute for, or a supplement to the "regular" pilot study depending on the information we want to receive. Focus groups are discussed further in chapter 5.

Selected study samples

The primary way a researcher investigates any phenomenon, organization, institution or process is through the experience of the individual person who is a part of that organization or a participant in the particular phenomenon or process. Thus, in the Multiple Case Narrative, the informant is a single person. The Multiple Case Narrative tries to inquire into as many individual persons (case narratives) as needed and/or is possible. The Multiple Case Narrative seeks to study many case narratives while preserving its constructivist-narrative characteristics. We study the phenomena through the eyes of the people who experience them. For instance, if we want to study the phenomenon of teaching mathematics, we examine many teachers, each of whom will be a single case narrative. If, for example, we want to explore the work of the social worker within an immigrant population, we will choose to examine several social workers, or several immigrants, or both. Each examination (of an individual person) will be a single case narrative.

The positivistic-quantitative research approach uses a random selection of participants. Randomness is a statistical concept that depends on a very large number of participants. In the Multiple Case Narrative we generally cannot use the random statistical sample. Rather than choosing a random sampling, the purposeful sample in the Multiple Case Narrative focuses on the most representative informants (Mason, 1996).

There are several characteristics of such informants which make them appropriate for the purpose of the study. Some people are more articulate and sensitive than others, and our informants need to be both (Fetterman, 1989). They must also be individuals who feel comfortable with being questioned and who can articulate their conscious experiences. Finally, they must be individuals who agree to spend the time necessary with the researcher. This last point becomes crucial,

mainly in instances in which we need to conduct more than one research phase, and thus the informants could become "tired" of and even frightened by too much self-exposure. However, we have found that is not difficult to select informants and to achieve rapport with them. After they discover that this type of open, in-depth interview is concerned with their stories and that the researchers do not try to judge them at all, many of the informants are ready to continue even beyond the predetermined time. In our experience, often the informants themselves have thanked the interviewer and said that the interview has been an opportunity for them to learn new things about themselves.

The Multiple Case Narrative claims more options for generalization to other populations than do other qualitative research strategies. In order to validate generalization of findings to population, which is appropriate for narrative research, the informants selected should represent a wide range of people and positions in the larger population under study. One can also select some informants who are outside the normative range and who may, in some sense, be considered negative cases (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). However, the number of cases in Multiple Case Narrative is probably too small to apply the conventional sample-to-population generalization argument. Even larger samples are rarely big enough to represent much wider population, and are not drawn randomly. We can thus talk about the special conditions of generalization appropriate to narrative research. (This issue will be expanded in chapter 12).

Conclusion

Researchers using the Multiple Case Narrative, like other researchers, always have theories in mind and these theories guide them in their investigation. Writing a temporal review of literature in the first stage of the research project helps the researcher to clarify the conceptual perspective of the research. However, these perspectives are not 'hypotheses' in the accepted sense; and the researchers indeed begin their research with an open mind. This review can and should always be updated according to new stories and new emerging conceptualizations. Researchers should be careful not to be blinded by their conceptual perspective and must be willing to modify it in light of the information gathered from the informants.

The identification of the focus of the research influences and is influenced by the conceptual perspective. Researchers design their studies according to the research problem they seek to address. The focus of the Multiple Case Narrative is to clarify the understanding of the participants' world as they emerge from their stories and not to examine hypotheses derived from theory. The design of the Multiple Case Narrative includes presenting a problem, asking questions, collecting data, analyzing the data, and answering the questions. However, the progression of the research is very flexible and does not follow a linear logic. All the research

phases are interrelated; each one depends on the others, and changes in one of them influence the others.

The function of the research questions in the Multiple Case Narrative is to guide the researchers in their study, while at the same time giving them the flexibility and freedom to explore the phenomenon in depth. Generally, researchers start with broad initial questions that become more focused. These initial questions are continually reevaluated and may even change their focus during the research process. We have suggested three types of questions: exploratory questions, first order questions and second order questions.

Sometimes the researcher does not even know enough to determine what should be the focus of the research, its questions or the procedure. In this case, a pilot study, consisting of a few case narratives, is suggested as a means of helping the researchers plan their study. Following the determination of the research questions and the research design (with or without the help of a pilot study) the researchers choose their study population. Each individual person is a 'case narrative', and the informants who are selected should be appropriate for the purposes of the study.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRINCIPLES OF DATA COLLECTION

Creswell (1998) visualizes data collection as:

> […] A series of interrelated activities aimed at gathering good information to answer an emerging research questions. […] An important step in the process is to find people or places to study and to gain access and establish rapport so those participants will provide good data. (p. 110)

The basis for data collection in the Multiple Case Narrative is the assumption that the data we seek to collect is constructivist-narrative by its nature (Bruner, 1996). The Multiple Case Narrative is, in its essence, a unique narrative type of research. The Multiple Case Narrative reflects an effort to expand the single narrative method so as to encompass as many case narratives as possible, as opposed to the small-scale, more intensive focus of other constructivist-qualitative research varieties. Data for the Multiple Case Narrative is gathered from people, and focuses on their stories, their explanations for the activities they participate in, the meaning they give to the phenomena they engage in, and so on.

The human-as-instrument

The human-as-instrument is a concept coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to illustrate the unique position of qualitative researchers in the process of data collection. A person, that is, a 'human-as-instrument', is the only instrument flexible enough to capture the complexity, subtlety, and constantly changing situation which is the human experience, as expressed in stories. In narrative studies, things are more indeterminate than pre-determined. There is no way to determine in advance the exact instrumentation we will use because "only the human instrument has the characteristics necessary to cope with an indeterminate situation" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 193).

> Certain characteristics differentiate the human researcher from other data collection instruments: the researcher is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered; what is known about the situation can be expanded through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects […] (Merriam, 1998, p. 7).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the human instrument is responsive, and has the sensitivity to relate to all personal and environmental cues that emerge. The human instrument is adaptable in terms of ability to collect information concerning multiple factors (at multiple levels) simultaneously. The human instrument is able to grasp holistic conceptions, and is able to picture the parts as a connected, holistic phenomenon. A human-as-instrument is competent to function simultaneously in the domains of explicit and tacit knowledge. The human also has the ability to process data as soon as it becomes available, to generate hypotheses on the spot, and to test those hypotheses with respondents within the very contexts they are generated. Two other important research characteristics that Lincoln and Guba point to are the ability to clarify and summarize, and the ability to contend with atypical or idiosyncratic responses.

> There is no reason to believe that humans cannot approach a level of trustworthiness similar to that of ordinary standardized tests - and for certain purposes, given some of the special characteristics enumerated above, even higher levels. (Lincoln and Guba, p. 195, 1985)

Human situations and human beings are too complex to be captured by a static one-dimensional instrument. A narrative researcher learns about significant aspects of reality by being involved in these complexities. The human-as-instrument is connected to the area of investigation both intentionally and philosophically. In other words, as we mentioned in chapter 2, the constructivist-narrative paradigm sees the knower and the known as connected. The narrative researcher recognizes this connection and works with, rather than against, it.

Eisner (1985) emphasizes the utility of the human-as-instrument and argues that this ability needs to be constantly improved and refined. According to him, "one can look without seeing, listen without hearing, eat without tasting, and touch without feeling" (Eisner, 1985, p. 151), and we must hone our skills so as not to fall into these traps. He has articulated a research approach, appropriate especially for evaluation studies, which has its roots in art theory. He calls his approach 'connoisseurship'. It assumes that the perceptive human eye can glean much insight from phenomena, and can grasp clues which would fall beyond the reach of standard measurement techniques. Such perceptions are of extreme importance in narrative research. To summarize, the human instrument is the only instrument of data collection which is multifaceted and complex enough to capture all the subtle elements of a human person or activity (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

To be involved in the investigation

The researcher does not stand above or outside the research. "The researcher's self is inextricably bound up with the research" (Woods, 1996, p. 51).

> Because the object of study in the social sciences is the product of thought or mind, it cannot be separated from the thought and mind of the investigator. The relationship between the social science researcher and that which is being investigated is not one of subject-object, but subject-subject. (Sciarra, 1999, p. 39)

The narrative researcher is part of the investigation and is involved as an in-depth interviewer, a participant observer, or a leader of a focus group. But the researcher also removes him/herself from the situation in order to rethink the meanings of the experiences and the informants' stories. "To understand a world you must become part of that world while at the same time remaining separate, a part of and apart from" (Patton, 1980, p. 121).

To be involved means to live between, and within. For narrative researchers this definition means being at one with the persons under investigation, 'walking a mile in the other person's shoes', or understanding the person's point of view from an empathic rather than a sympathetic position. "In fact, it is the ability to be with others that distinguishes the qualitative researcher" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 28). The narrative researcher aims at experiencing the world of the subject as a participant.

> If we are to understand social life, what motivates people, what their interests are, what links them to and distinguishes them from others, what their cherished values and beliefs are, why they act as they do, and how they perceive themselves and others, we need to put ourselves in their position and look out at the world with them. (Woods, 1996, p. 38)

One of the methodological problems for narrative researchers is finding the path between involvement, immersion and empathy on the one hand, and distance and critical thinking on the other. The former is necessary to understand others' perspectives as *they* see them, to see how *they* see others, to identify *their* problems and concerns, and to decode their symbolic discourse and behavior. It involves negotiating access, developing rapport, trust and friendship, sociability, inclusion, identification with the others involved, sensitivity to their concerns and appreciation for their feelings as well as cognitive orientations. This kind of involvement, however, must also be reflective. To reflect is to pause and think; to process what has gone before; to be able to stand apart and reassemble the 'knowings' learned (Woods, 1996; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

What people articulate is a major source of narrative data, be this verbal articulation as in an interview, or written articulation in documentary sources. Narrative data consist of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and behaviors observed; direct quotations from the subjects under examination about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts; and excerpts of entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories,

all included in the informants' anecdotal narratives (Van Manen, 1990). The data collected are open-ended narrative without any attempt to fit the behavior or attitudes expressed into predetermined, standardized categories. The researcher tries to understand how people "construct their experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs and feelings" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 30). The purpose of the narrative report is to take the reader into the setting that was observed. The data must be rich and sufficiently descriptive so that the reader can understand what occurred and how it occurred (Patton, 1980).

Methodologically, this means learning the language of the participants, in all its nuances and perhaps idiosyncratic vocabulary. Other means of communication - gestures, facial expressions, actions, appearance, and the whole arena of 'body language' or non-verbal communication intended to convey meaning to others - are also important. Scenes must be closely monitored if we are to identify their inner mysteries (Geertz, 1973). The words themselves are not enough, even though they may be the same as those used by the researcher. They must be interpreted. The researcher aims for 'shared meanings', when one feels part of the culture and can interpret words and gestures as would the members of that culture or sub-culture. The narrative researcher would want to know how the experience was understood by those involved (Jorgensen, 1989).

Tacit and explicit knowledge

Two types of knowledge play a part in the way we understand the world: tacit and explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967). Tacit knowledge is unarticulated knowledge. It is unformulated; the type of knowledge, say, which is expressed in the order in which we perform certain tasks or understand certain actions. Explicit knowledge is that of which we are cognizant, which is or can be recorded in words, maps, or mathematical formulas. Tacit knowledge is more basic and fundamental and comes before explicit knowledge. The primary difference between the two types of knowledge is that explicit knowledge can be expressed, accurately described and can therefore be subject to one's own, and others' reflection and analysis, while tacit knowledge cannot.

Part of all human knowledge is tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge becomes the base on which the human instrument builds many of the insights and hypotheses that will eventually support his or her study. "That tacit knowledge must be converted to propositional knowledge so that the inquirer can both think about it explicitly and communicate it to others" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 198). It is not possible to understand other people just by what we see, hear or even touch. People themselves cannot describe or explain everything that they 'know' completely in language forms. Thus, Multiple Case Narrative depends upon the researcher being the primary conduit for data collection and analysis.

> Tacit knowledge is gained by indwelling. When one lives within a situation one learns to pay attention to the subsidiary, that is, one learns to attend away from the object and toward the meaning of the object. This is what we do in reading, for example. In order to read this passage, you must focus away from the letters and even the words, toward the meaning of the passage. […] It is 'not by looking at things, but by indwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning' (Polanyi, 1967, p. 18). […] This is the paradox of tacit knowledge and of indwelling: The pieces of the puzzle are essential to knowing the whole, but in order to gain an understanding of the whole, we must experience, rather than attend to, these pieces, thus allowing the whole to emerge from the experience (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 31-32)

This is not a simple task. In practice, this means that as we begin a narrative inquiry we bring to bear our own tacit as well as explicit knowledge in order to understand the situation in addition to the tacit as well and explicit knowledge of our informants. "Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit – to articulate their tacit perceptions, feelings and understandings" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 32).

Gathering data from the field

One of the ways of involvement with the informants is through field work. Field work entails becoming intimately familiar, through observation and interviews, with the informants under investigation, within their culture or sub-group. Woods (1996) reminds us of the dangers of this kind of intimate involvement and the frequently expressed criticism of some qualitative researchers that they romanticize both the site under inquiry and their informants, seeing them through 'rose-colored' glasses. He suggests the need to cultivate some social distance as protection against these dangers.

The data for the Multiple Case Narrative are gathered using three major methods: interviewing, observation, and document reviewing. Most narrative methods are interactive: they involve dealing with people. This interactive method of collecting data is one of the earmarks of the constructivist-narrative approach. Much of the data produced through fieldwork methods or open-ended interview questions may be of the same narrative form (Dey, 1993). There are tools which are extensions of these methods of gathering data, which serve as aids to memory and vision: notepads, tape recorders, cameras, computers, database software, hypertext, printers, videotape, cinema (Fetterman, 1989; Creswell, 1989).

The multiple combinations and opportunities to triangulate the data is one of the characteristics that contributes to the distinctive constructivist-narrative approach (Rist, 1982). Five types of data are most "relevant" for constructivist-narrative research: [1] Form and content of verbal interaction between participants [2] Form and content of verbal interaction with researcher [3] Non-verbal behavior

[4] Patterns of action and non-action [5] archival records, artifacts, documents. (Merriam 1985). Most of the types are useful in Multiple Case Narrative, with variations in relative weight and emphases.

As we will explain in the next chapter, in Multiple Case Narrative research we use 'formal' methods of gathering data, mainly interviews but also observation and focus groups. These methods contain distinct principles and the data are recorded or videotaped and transcribed word by word. While it is important to base the research on such a valid data base, we also use field notes, taken non-formally from the field, while observing or interviewing. These field notes are mainly comments on events that for some reason were not recorded during the formal stage of data collection. Sometimes the comments relate to conversations or events that occurred before or after the formal stage of the data collection, or to events that cannot be recorded by video or audio tape. The researcher should keep systematic notes from the interviews or of the observed situation - either while they are in progress or immediately thereafter. It is important to write the field notes as soon as the event or act has occurred, for, if left unrecorded, it is likely to be forgotten. These notes become an important part of our data base and are subject to analysis with other sources of data (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Jorgensen, 1989).

Comparison between two research approaches

The positivistic-quantitative researcher attempts to be objective and, in fact, claims to achieve objectivity through his or her specific information gathering tools such as standardized tests, and mathematical or statistical analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). Positivistic-quantitative research "relies upon the use of instruments that provide a standarizied framework in order to limit data collection to certain predetermined response or analysis categories" (Patton, 1980, p. 22). By contrast, the researcher who uses a constructivist-narrative approach "seeks to capture what people have to say in their own words" (Patton, 1980, p. 22). Narrative data provide depth and detail, and the descriptions are longer and more varied in content. The narrative researcher adopts a position of involvement while engaging in research. This position is very different from that of a positivist-quantitative researcher because each research orientation is based on different sets of presumptions about the nature of the world, and the implications of those presumptions on the conduct of research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Instrumentation for the narrative researcher is not external ('objective') but internal ('subjective'). Data analysis is open-ended and inductive, in contrast to the focused and deductive analysis common in positivistic-quantitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The demands of narrative inquiry on a researcher's intellect, ego, and emotions

are far greater than are any positivistic-quantitative research strategies. This is because the data collection procedures are not routinized. There are no a priori questions or hypotheses to guide decisions on data collection and data analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In narrative inquiry, the research questions may change as the research progresses, as may the techniques for gathering data. The researcher must therefore be willing to be flexible and responsive to the particularities of the field (Yin,1984; Marshall and Roseman, 1989).

The cultural context of data collection

One of the major concerns in narrative data collection and analysis is to understand the informants' world within context. No phenomenon can be understood outside of its relationship to the time and context that supports it (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In other words, no phenomenon can be understood outside of its culture.

> By virtue of participation in culture, meaning is rendered public and shared. Our culturally adapted way of life depends upon shared meanings and shared concepts and depends as well upon shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation. (Bruner, 1990, p. 12-13)

It is humans' participation in culture and the realization of their mental powers through culture that make it impossible to construct a human world on the basis of the individual alone. Or, to quote Geertz, "there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture" (1973, p. 49). Based on this concept, we can see that meaning depends upon cultural context and data must always be considered in context. The research process must be carried out in regard to a cultural setting, because phenomena of study take their meaning as much from their culture as they do from themselves.

There is always tension between the informants' world as it is simply articulated and the unseen wider cultural context within which the informants live their lives. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest several circles of cultural context, each containing properties of time and place. The outermost circle may be thought of as the international-cultural arena. The second circle may be seen as the national-cultural arena. Next comes the community circle: the organizational and institutional sphere. Inside this is the sub-organizational, sub-institutional sphere, and then come the small group, family and individual levels. At the center is the level of interpersonal interaction: people doing things together or with respect to one another in relation to a phenomenon - negotiating, dominating, teaching, discussing, debating, and reflecting. When collecting data, the researcher examines the effects of the cultural milieu on the people's experience of the phenomenon, and he or she should determine which arenas are the most relevant for understanding.

Varieties of data collection in different qualitative strategies

While all the constructivist-qualitative research strategies follow the same basic approaches, there are some differences in the methods by which they gather data (as well as in the methods of analysis and of writing the final report). Data collection varies mainly in terms of its emphasis on different data collection methods (e.g. the respective emphasis on observation or interviews); regarding the extent of data collection (e.g. focusing mainly on one type of source or a triangulation of several sources); as well as in terms of the nature of the data (e.g. whether most of the data are gathered through unstructured field work or through interviews).

In order to clarify the process of data collection in the Multiple Case Narrative, we will review two qualitative research strategies which, in some respects, represent two poles of the sequence of data gathering. One is the phenomenological research tradition, and the other is the ethnographic research tradition. The following description of each research tradition, emphasizing methods of data collection, could help us highlight the main features of data collection in the Multiple Case Narrative.

Phenomenology

The term 'phenomenological' that is now widely used to refer to human consciousness in general, has been borrowed from the writings of the phenomenological philosophers who developed many of our modern understandings about consciousness. It has roots in the philosophical perspectives of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) with his extensive writings addressing the philosophy of phenomenology. Phenomenology involves a transcendental search for the 'essence' of human experience (or the central underlying meaning of the experience) (Willis, 1991).

The 'phenomenon' is what is being examined by phenomenologists. The term 'phenomenon' is used as a general term to refer to the actual grasp that one has of the real things and events that exist in the world transcendent to that grasp or apprehension. A phenomenon is the event as it is experienced by the subjects who experience it. When one begins to specify 'phenomena' one begins to articulate domains such as perceptions, memories, images, cognition, etc. (Van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 1998).

Phenomenologists explore the structures of consciousness in human experience (Gall et al., 1996). The phenomenological approach focuses on understanding the meaning that events have for the persons participating in them. Accordingly, the researcher may reduce the informants' experience to a central meaning or the 'essence' of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Basic concepts are defined phenomenologically, that is, in terms of what these ideas and actions mean to people in a particular situation (Jorgensen, 1989). While in other varieties of

qualitative research the focus is mainly on an object or process and the researcher seeks to understand these objects and processes in the context of the participants, in phenomenological studies the research is focused on understanding the meaning to the participants themselves of these objects and processes (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The positivistic paradigm stands in stark contrast to phenomenology. Positivism assumes the existence of an objective reality, is typically deductive in approach, and establishes a priori assumptions about relationships (Fetterman, 1989). In phenomenological study, the 'thing as perceived' is the phenomenon, the focus of the research. This is different from an analysis of the thing itself, which is the model of the positivistic-scientific paradigm. The perceived object is neither the object, nor the act of perceiving it. It is "the intentional object, or the phenomenal object, which is the way in which the transcendent object is specifically grasped by consciousness" (Giorgi, 1995, p. 35). Phenomenology is concerned with the modalities of consciousness by which a thing is comprehended: the table as perceived, the lesson as remembered, the argument as experienced, the play as imagined, the discussion as anticipated, and so on (Giorgy, 1995).

Being conscious of objects is always intentional. Intentionality is the essence of consciousness itself.

> Another way to express intentionality is to say that it is that characteristic of consciousness by means of which we are directed towards an object that is external to us – the sky, an animal, the TV set, the noise in the street, and so on. It is rather obvious point that we are aware of things and processes that are external to us […]. (Giorgi, 1995, p. 33)

The intentional experience is a combination of the outward appearance of the observed object and the object as contained in consciousness based on memory, image and meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

When the objects are transcendent to consciousness itself, they are known as transcendent (external) objects. These could be houses, doors, cars, other people, etc. When the objects belong to the same consciousness as the acts, they are known as immanent (internal) objects. Immanent objects would be images, memories, fantasies, and so on. Like transcendent objects (houses, trees, animals etc.) whose image persists in memory over time, the presentation of the immanent objects (fantasies, misery, anger etc.) also persists over time. But unlike the case of the tree itself (transcendent object), one person's remembered representation is not in the world and it could not be perceived by anyone else.

> This possibility of repetitiveness and the fact that there is an identity associated with the memory is what gives the memorial object phenomenal status, even if not as a 'real thing' […] In other words, a memory is certainly not a thing, but, just as assuredly, it is a phenomenon. It is a kind

> of presence. Thus, if psychology is defined by the phenomenal realm, there is no problem with memories (or images, hallucinations, delusions, etc.) because we can all witness them as given presences. (Giorgy, 1995, p. 36)

The phenomenological position sees the individual and his or her world as co-constituted; the person is viewed as having no existence apart from the world, and the world as having no existence apart from the person (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The phenomenological presumption is that without awareness and intention nothing can really be done. It is impossible to accomplish anything without awareness of it. Sometimes we do things incidentally, but we don't know about it until we realize it. Thus, the researcher does not seek the empirical objective itself, but the phenomenological presence of the object. The reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual.

> So, even when the intentional object is based upon something real, it is still not the real object that is analyzed in psychology analysis. It is the intentional object, which is a phenomenon of presence, and it has to be accessed through an act of reflection. (Giorgy, 1995, p. 35)

For a phenomenological study, the process of collecting information involves primarily conducting in-depth interviews and collecting personal diaries. The investigator collects data from individuals who have experienced first hand the phenomenon under study. He/she seeks to explore the meaning of the experience for those individuals and its place in their everyday life (Creswell, 1998). The phenomenological methods for collecting data are slightly different from those in most of the other qualitative traditions. Unlike the ethnographic, for instance (as will be explained below), the phenomenological study is not a 'real' naturalist inquiry in which data is collected directly from the 'field'. The phenomenological researcher gathers the data through in-depth interviews and/or diaries, as well as by directing the informants to be reflective and to tell their stories.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the work of describing and interpreting culture. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people. An ethnographic strategy is chosen when one wants to study the behavior of a culture-sharing group (Spradley, 1979).

> Ethnography is the study of an intact cultural or social group (or individual 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 culture portrait. (Creswell, 1998, p. 246)

Culture according to Geertz (1973) consists not only of symbols in which people express themselves (language, deeds, objects, etc.), but also of the meanings which

people grant to the symbols. Culture refers to the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience. In short, culture is a system of meaningful symbols. The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events for the culture we seek to understand. Some of these meanings are directly expressed in language; many are taken for granted and communicated only indirectly through word and action. "Ethnographers assume that what makes human beings unique as a species is the influence of culture in their lives, and that the most important difference between groups of people is their culture" (Gall et al., 1996, p. 609). The ethnographer observes behavior, but goes beyond it to inquire about the cultural meaning of that behavior. The researcher studies the meaning of behavior, language, and interactions of culture sharing.

> If they are to understand people's outlooks and experiences, researchers must be close to groups, live with them, see them in various situations and in various modes, appreciate the inconsistencies, ambiguities, and contradictions in their behavior, explore the nature and extent of their interests, and understand their relationships among themselves and with other groups – in short, if possible, to adopt their roles. […] To understand social interaction, it is necessary to witness it as closely as possible and in depth, in all its manifestations and all the situations in which the form under examination occurs. Because social interaction is constructed by the people engaged in it, one should try to see it from their point of view and appreciate how they interpret the indications given to them by others, the meaning they assign to them, and how they construct their own action. (Woods, 1996, p. 39)

People everywhere learn their culture by observing other people, listening to them, and then making inferences. The ethnographer employs this same process of going by what is seen and heard to infer what people know. At first each cultural inference is only a hypothesis about what people know (Spradley, 1979). Gathering information through observations, interviews, and physical materials is helpful in developing a cultural portrait of the culture-sharing group (Gall et al., 1996). The ethnographer locates key informants - individuals who are able to provide useful insights into the group and who can steer the researcher to information and contacts. Ethnographers look for patterns of thought and behavior, and see these patterns of thought and action repeated in various situations and amongst various players. Looking for patterns is a form of analysis, and in practice the ethnographer works simultaneously on many patterns (Fetterman, 1989).

To identify these patterns, the ethnographer engages in extensive work in the field, called fieldwork.

> The underlying assumption of the ethnographic method is that the world is essentially a social business, produced through the interaction of people as they go about their life in an everyday, mundane way. In order to find out how a particular community operates, one must invest an

> extensive period of time (traditionally measured in years, rather than in hours, days or weeks) living with them: being physically, verbally and emotionally present, moving among their interactions, joining in their discourse, using their objects and technologies and becoming part of the economy of things, values, morals and money. (Rachel, 1996, p. 114)

Fieldwork is the most characteristic element of any ethnographic research design. The most important element of fieldwork is to be there - to observe, to ask questions, and to write down what is seen and heard. In doing fieldwork, ethnographers make cultural inferences from three sources: from what people say; from the way in which people act; and from the artifacts people use.

Fieldwork ends when the researcher leaves the site, but ethnography continues. The ethnographer's task is not only to collect information from the insider's perspective, the view of the informants (emic), but also to make sense of all the data from an external social scientific perspective, the view of the researcher (etic). Some ethnographers are interested only in describing the emic view, without placing their data in an etic or scientific perspective (Fetterman, 1989; Gall et al., 1996).

Ethnography is an ambiguous term representing both a process and a product. As a product, an ethnography is usually a book or some other kind of manuscript (Agar, 1980). This final product of an ethnographic research is a holistic cultural portrait of the social group that incorporates both the views of the actors in the group (emic) and the researcher's interpretation of these views in terms of human social life from a social science perspective (etic). A 'holistic portrait' means that the ethnographer attempts to understand and describe as much as possible about a cultural system or social group, and this might include the group's history, religion, politics, economy, and environment. A 'cultural portrait' means an overview of the entire cultural scene which is arrived at by pulling together all aspects learned about the group and showing its full complexity (Creswell, 1998).

The principles of data collection in Multiple Case Narrative

As we pointed out earlier, there are several strategies in qualitative inquiry that differ from one another in many respects, including methods of data collection. As was discussed in the previous sections, the differences among qualitative approaches are prominent when we compare, for example, phenomenological and ethnographic strategies. The former focuses mostly on interviews as a primary source of data, and observation is usually not included in the phenomenological strategy design. If it is included, observation is generally regarded as a secondary source of data. On the other hand, the ethnographic study focuses mainly on observation, on researcher involvement as a participant observer, and on other field strategies. In the ethnographic strategy, the formal interview is regarded as a secondary source of data.

In Multiple Case Narrative we discriminate between data from two sources: primary sources of data and secondary sources of data. By primary sources of data we mean any data that we obtain directly from the informants by means of interviews, focus groups, diaries and so on. This type of data comprises the informants' stories, descriptions, explanations, illustrations, interpretations, views, thoughts and any other descriptive verbal types of data. In Multiple Case Narrative, we use the term secondary sources of data to mean any data that we collect in our research which are not derived from the stories, descriptions, explanations and interpretations taken directly from the informants. This type of data includes observations (even direct observations of the informants in their natural sites are considered secondary sources of data in this type of study), documents and other materials related to the phenomena under inquiry. This type of data is considered secondary data because it is not the clear, direct stories, descriptions and explanations of our informants.

The next chapter is devoted to the methods of data collection in the Multiple Case Narrative.

Conclusion

There are several assumptions that are specific to the process of data collection in narrative inquiry. The human-as-instrument is the vehicle most suited to the demands of this process, as it has flexibility, sensitivity, and perceptive skills which are holistic and can operate simultaneously. Thus, only the perceptive human senses can glean the kind of insights we seek from phenomena. The researchers should be part of the investigation and participate in the others' world while keeping a balance between involvement, immersion and empathy on the one hand and distance and critical thinking on the other.

Two types of human knowledge play a part in the world: tacit knowledge (the unarticulated type of knowledge) and explicit knowledge. The challenge of researchers is to convert the tacit knowledge into propositional knowledge so that they can think about it explicitly and communicate it to others. The nature of the data gathering methods in Multiple Case Narrative is designed to give optimal expression to the assumptions of this type of research.

We discriminate between primary sources of data and secondary sources of data, with the former originating directly from the informants' stories, mostly by means of interviews, focus groups and diaries; the latter stems mostly from observations and documents. While the Multiple Case Narrative may gather both types of data, the emphasis is on the primary sources of data, mainly interviews.

CHAPTER 5

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in Multiple Case Narrative we discriminate between two types of data: primary data and secondary data. In this chapter we will discuss the two methods of gathering primary data which are most prevalent in the Multiple Case Narrative: interview and focus groups. We will also discuss observation as a secondary data that is sometimes used in this type of research. The stimulated-recall interview will be discussed as a method that utilizes secondary data (such as observation and documents) in the process of gathering primary data.

The In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews, which are the main source of primary data in Multiple Case Narrative, are in many if not most cases, the only data resource of the research.

> Asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than may seem at first. The spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and how carefully we report or code the answers. Yet interview is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings. (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 645)

The in-depth interview is the type of interviewing usually used in qualitative research, including in Multiple Case Narrative. The purpose of in-depth interviewing is neither simply to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience. Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior (Seidman, 1991).

The term interviewing covers a wide range of practices. At one side of the continuum there are tightly structured, survey interviews with standardized and normally closed questions. This type of formal interview is sometimes necessary in research in order to standardize interview topics and general questions. At the other end of the continuum are the open-ended, apparently unstructured interviews.

These types of in-depth interviews bear more resemblance to conversations than to formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views and perspectives on meaning, but otherwise respects the way in which the participants frame and structure their responses (Flick, 1998; Mason, 1996; Seidman, 1991; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Mishler, 1986; Spradley, 1979).

Focus on the informants' stories

Cognitive theory assumes that we can describe what people think by listening to what they say (Fetterman, 1989). In the course of daily life, people make sense of the world around them. They give it meaning and they interact on the basis of these meanings. "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them" (Denzin, 1995, p. 43). At the very heart of what it means to be human is the ability to express one's experience through symbolic language. Thus to understand human behavior means to understand the use of language (Seidman, 1991). It is not possible to acquire more than a very crude notion of the insiders' world until you comprehend the culture and language that are used to communicate its meanings (Jorgensen 1989).

> Language is more than a means of communication about reality: it is tool for constructing reality. Different languages create and express different realities. They categorize experience in different ways. They provide alternative patterns for customary ways of thinking and perceiving. (Spradley, 1979, p. 17)

"People are storytellers by nature" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 7); they are constructors of narrative about their lives. (This issue was discussed extensively in chapter 2.) Like the historian who tells stories about the past, people tell stories about their lives (Bruner, 1990). Telling stories about the past and the present, as well as about future planned events, seems to be a universal human activity and one of the first forms of discourse we learn as children (Riessman, 1993). The task of the interviewer is to help the informants to construct their narratives:

> The "new" recognition that people narrativize their experience of the world and their own role in it has even forced social scientists to reconsider how they use their principal instrument of research – the interview. (Bruner, 1990, p. 115)

When our informants explain what they know, we often hear stories. In most cases, this kind of transformation of life to story involves progressing from an incomplete story or a mixture of several fragmented narratives to one that is more complete and compelling (Gudmundsdottir, 1995; 1996). Our informants' narrative competence is important. If the interviewer does not suppress the informants' responses by limiting their answers to what is relevant to a narrowly specified

question, a storied answer will be provided. If our informants are poor narrators, we intuitively and quite spontaneously 're-story' by filling the holes in the narrative with our own information, and two different narratives emerge: the researcher's and the informant's (Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1995). In such a case, it is important to verify the congruence of the two narratives.

Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. In order to give the details of their experience, people must reflect on their experience. It is this process of selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order and thereby making sense of them, that makes telling stories a meaning-making process. Every word that people use in their stories is a microcosm of their consciousness (Seidman, 1991).

Basic principles of conducting an in-depth interview

In setting out to discover the cultural reality of a single person or a particular group of people, the researcher faces a crucial question: What terminology should I use when/in asking questions and recording the meanings I discover? Conventional-quantitative survey research with respondents almost always employs the terminology of the discipline of inquiry. On the other hand, Multiple Case Narrative, like other varieties of constructivist-qualitative research, depends more fully on the language of the informants (Spradley, 1979). In order to enable the informants to tell their stories about the phenomenon being investigated in their own way and using their own language, the researchers prefer to use an in-depth interview, rather than a structured one.

Each interview is the product of a mutual interaction between speaker and listener (Mishler, 1986). In-depth interviews are conversations in which both participant/teller and listener/questioner - develop meaning together. It is best to think of in-depth interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist interviewees to respond as informants. Through their cooperation in the research process, researchers and informants jointly put the pieces together into a meaningful whole; something that makes sense to both with each participant having left his or her mark on the process and the product (Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Riessman, 1993; Spradley, 1979). Mishler (1986) proposed that the research interview is no longer seen as a tool for mere 'information gathering'. Rather, it is a site at which partners meet and converse and, through their conversations, 'jointly construct meaning.'

> The interview, therefore, is not just a device for gathering information. It is a process of reality construction to which both parties contribute and by which both are affected. […] Thus the researcher is a finely tuned instrument with considerable skills, but is a person no less, with values, beliefs and a self. (Woods, 1996, p.53)

In the Multiple Case Narrative there are no rules for the appropriate number of interviews for each informant. It depends on the purpose and the extent of each research project. In most of our studies which are based on multiple participants, we hold two interviews for each informant (for example, Shkedi, 1997; Shkedi and Horenczyk, 1995). More important is to use an approximately 90 minute interview format. Less than an hour is generally too short for the informants to reconstruct their experience, put it in the appropriate context, and reflect on its meaning. On the other hand, two hours or more is too long to sit at one time. If the alloted time is over and the informant feels tired, both the researcher and the informant can decide to continue at another time.

Normally, in-depth interviews are started by means of an initial opening question. The interviewee's story is not interrupted by further questions but is encouraged by means of nonverbal and paralinguistic expressions of interest and attention. As the interviewees speak, they watch us for clues about how to proceed. We give them these cues in the non-verbal language of the body and in slightly more explicit 'hmm's' and 'a-ha's' that can be read as encouragement. Listening to an informant in an interview situation is a very special kind of listening. It is "active" and constructive (Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Arksey and Knight, 1999).

In this kind of interview, it is the informants who first tell their stories and the researcher needs to listen closely. Informants are engaged by the interviewers to speak in their own languages and idioms. The interviewer should consider that he/she is listening to the informant's own story, and that this story cannot be understood outside of its cultural background. The interviewer also needs to understand that the informants' language and idioms are the ways in which their culture is expressed. This does not mean that the researcher is silenced during the interview. It does mean, however, that the informant is given the time and space necessary to tell her or his story. The interviewer works together with informants in order to describe their cultural stories (Spradley, 1979; Connelly and Clandinin 1990).

> Listening is the most important skill in interviewing. The hardest work for most interviewers is to keep quiet and to listen actively. […] Interviewers must listen on at least three levels. First, they must listen to what the participant is saying. They must concentrate on the substance to make sure that they understand it and to assess whether what they are hearing is as detailed and complete as they would like it to be. […] On the second level, interviewers must listen for what George Steiner (1978) calls "inner voice" as opposed to an outer, more public voice. […] By taking participants' language seriously without making them feel defensive about it, interviewers can encourage a level of thoughtfulness more characteristic of inner voice. On the third level, interviewers – like good teachers in a classroom - must listen while remaining aware of the process as well as the substance. […] They must be sensitive to the participant's energy level and any nonverbal cues he or she may be offering. (Seidman, 1991, pp. 56-57)

Every interview should start with a few sentences of explanation about the research, about the coming interview, about the researcher's interests, about the recording of the interview, and should also supply any other information that the informant wants or needs to know. The interview should be recorded following the researcher's getting the informant's permission to do so. After the researcher establishes a starting point for rapport, the interview can begin. A very useful opening question is to ask the informant to tell about him/herself; to give some background-personal stories. This question may be framed like: 'After I start the tape recorder, please tell me about yourself, your professional background….' and so on, (depending on the topic of the research). For some interviewees that is enough for them to start their story, which they can continue until we cautiously interrupt to direct them. Others need the interviewer's direction from the first few sentences. They watch us for clues about how to proceed and we can give them non-verbal cues. If it is necessary, we ask them further directed questions.

Types of interview questions

There are six main types of questions: [a] descriptive questions; [b] meaning questions; [c] comparison questions; [d] complement questions; [e] contrast questions; [f] triggered questions.

The first type of questions is the descriptive questions. These are the basic questions of the interview. We ask the interviewees to tell their story and we expect a description in response. The key words of these questions are 'what', 'how', 'where' and so on. Spradely (1979) suggests five major sub-types of the descriptive questions:

[1] Grand tour questions: This kind of questions is quite open and invites the informant to tell his/her story almost without any special direction. These could be questions regarding descriptions of events as well as descriptions of ideas and opinions. Examples of a grand tour question: 'Describe your working day from the time you start until the time you go home.' Or 'What is your opinion about the political situation…' and so on.

[2] Mini tour questions: Responses to grand tour questions offer an almost unlimited number of opportunities for further investigation of smaller aspects of experience. In mini tour questions the interviewer asks the informant to reconstruct the details of a more limited time span or of a particular experience. Examples: 'What happened when you met your co-workers?' or 'What is your opinion of the last political debate?'

[3] Example questions: These questions take some single act or event identified by the informant and ask for examples. For instance: 'What exactly happened this time when your friend came to meet you?'

[4] Experience questions: This type asks informants to describe any experiences

they have had in some particular setting. These kinds of question ask the interviewee to focus more on his/her subjective experience than on the external event. An example: 'How did you feel in that meeting?'

[5] Native-language questions: These questions ask informants to use the terms and phrases most commonly used in their cultural arena. Native-language questions serve to remind informants that the researcher wants to learn the local cultural implications of the language they use. For example: in an interview with religious people: 'Can you explain to me the words of the prayer you say?' or in an interview with teenagers, 'What do you mean by saying "bullshit" all the time?'

The second type of questions is the meaning questions. Basically, this type of question is based on the informants' descriptions. We ask the interviewees to clarify and explain the meanings of and the reasoning behind their descriptions. The key words of these questions are 'why', 'what for', 'wherefore', 'for what purpose', 'what was the intention' and so on. The interviewer listens to the informants' descriptions and tries to encourage them to bring out their meaning. For example: 'Why did you decide to buy this book?', 'What was the reason for your decision?', or 'Why did you feel so bad in that meeting?', and so on.

The third type of questions is the comparison questions. This type of question is based on the informants' responses to the descriptive and/or meaning questions. With this kind of question the interviewer tries to direct the informants to sharpen their descriptions and/or explanations. Questions like: 'Can you compare your feelings during the morning activities to your feelings during the evening activities?' or 'Why did you decide to be patient with the children in one case and to punish them in the other case?', and so on. Often we use this kind of question in order to deepen our knowledge and understanding without having to repeat the same question several times. It serves as a way to ask descriptive and meaning questions in a new and different fashion.

The fourth type of questions is the complement questions. During the interview, the informants usually raise many topics without penetrating too deeply into the stories themselves. The informants move very quickly from topic to topic directed by their conception of the whole story, while leaving many issues more implicit than explicit. Thus we could lose many important points. In the course of the interview, therefore, it is very important to refer back to the undeveloped and unclear points that the informants mentioned earlier. For example: 'What did you mean by saying: "I felt very bad"? Would you expand on your description?' Or even: 'Your description of your last holiday was very interesting. Can you explain to me what your friend's reaction was?' and the like. The interviewer should find the appropriate moment to ask the complement questions without interrupting the flow of the informants' talk. We suggest waiting for a moment of silence in order to raise such questions. This kind of questions not only complements the informant's

stories, but also transmits the message that the informant's stories are very interesting to us and that he/she is on the right path.

The fifth group of questions is the contrast questions. The purpose of these questions is similar to that of comparison questions, and they are also based on the information we have already received from the informants. These questions rest on the assumption that different parts of the informants' stories have apparent contradictions. In one context they may tell one version of an event which will be contradicted by another version in a different context. These dissimilar versions are immanent to the nature of human stories and often arise because of the diverse and changeable contexts within which people live (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996). However, we need to understand the informants' stories within their appropriate context. It seems that in many cases, this type of question is a way to assist the informants to sharpen their descriptions and explanations. A question like: 'Why did you give one explanation in this case while you gave another explanation in the other case?' is an example of contrast questions.

The sixth group of questions is the triggered questions. This kind of question is quite similar to the previous group of questions, but instead of holding up to informants their own words and opinions for clarification, here we confront them with the words and opinions of others. We call these 'trigger questions' because they act as a trigger for responses and bring the informants to express themselves. We use the triggered questions to discuss and even to debate with the informants. The purpose is to sharpen the informants' stories by confronting them with our or other opinions in order to get their reactions. A question like: 'How can you say that the book is very interesting while all the book's reviewers agree that this book is very boring. Yet you said that you found it interesting. Can you explain this?' is an example of a triggered question.

Using contrast and triggered questions may be very risky. Sometimes these kinds of questions are very fruitful, but at other times they could cause damage; it all depends on the interviewer and the interaction which has developed between him/her and the informants. The informants could feel attacked which could cause the interviewers to lose their trust and rapport. Thus, the interviewer should be very cautious in the use of these questions. In any case, this type of question should be presented in the advanced stages of the interview, after the interviewer is sure of the rapport between him/herself and the informants.

Researchers can also choose small written portions that may reflect relevant views on issues close to what they want to investigate and ask the informants to react and to express their own opinions. For example, if we interview physicians, we could present them a short description of a particular medical treatment and ask for their opinions and reflections. This technique is very effective in Multiple Case Narrative, because it allows us to present the same material to all the informants

and to elicit everyone's unique reaction. Thus, we preserve the constructivist-narrative character of the interview in spite of our use of exactly the same materials in all the interviews.

Technical and organizational framework

It might be useful to divide the interview into two parts. The first part is the more open part. At this stage, it is preferable to ask questions that open up topics and allow respondents to construct answers in the ways that they find meaningful (Mishler, 1986). In this part of the interview the interviewer uses mostly grand tour and mini tour questions (Spradley, 1979). During the second part of the interview the interviewer may carefully add other, more focused types of questions. This part of the interview is the 'period of detailed questioning' when the interviewer initiates deeper discussions, through directed questions, on topics and biographical events already mentioned. The interviewer can also ask questions about issues that have not been addressed (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000).

Interviews are conducted with some research purpose in mind. Even though the interview is open and unstructured, the researcher should be cognizant of its direction. "Qualitative researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 646). It is very important that during the interview, the researcher-interviewer concentrate on listening to and observing the informants while remaining focused on the research question. Thus, in constructing the interview, the researcher-interviewer will have some advance idea of what questions to ask and which topics to pursue (Dey, 1993). Since the interview will be recorded, the interviewer is free to focus full attention on the topics that arise in the course of the interview. To remind the researchers of what they wish to accomplish during the interview, a topical checklist can be useful. These lists usually contain the major topics and questions that the researcher would like to cover during the interview (Fetterman, 1989). This list of topics is prepared in advance, and during the interview the researcher can check off which topics have been covered. At the same time, the interviewer should make note of new topics raised in the informants' stories which are worthy of follow-up questions, and these will be the basis for the complement and contrast questions (see explanation above). During the interview, at an appropriate moment, the interviewer can ask the informant to relate to these topics.

As we insisted above, the interviews should be tape-recorded. The need to tape-record every word of the interview is based on the assumption that each word reflects the informant's consciousness (Seidman, 1991). It also strengthens the reliability and validity of the research (This issue will be expanded in chapter 13). The use of a tape recorder also allows the interviewer to be free to listen, observe

and consider the interview. Following the interviews, it is best to transcribe the whole interview word for word. Unfortunately, this process takes a lot of time and is very expensive. In the Multiple Case Narrative, which is based on a large number of interviews, the issues of time and cost are real considerations. Therefore, it is possible first, to transcribe only a few interviews and to analyze them (for further discussion on analysis, see chapters 6-11). After analyzing the first group of interviews the main topics of the whole research may already have become clear. On this basis, it is possible for the researcher to listen to the rest of the recordings to pick out those sections that seem relevant to the subjects of the research, and then to transcribe only those sections (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). The transcriber should mark down all the nonverbal signals such as coughs, laughs, pauses, outside noises, and interruptions that are heard on the tape in their appropriate places on the transcription (Seidman, 1991; Riessman, 1993).

A relationship of rapport and participation

Narrative interviewing involves two distinct but complementary processes: eliciting information and developing rapport. The interviewing relationship must be marked by respect, interest, attention, trust, understanding and good manners on the part of the interviewer (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

> The most important personal characteristic interviewers must have is a genuine interest in other people. They must be deeply aware that other people's stories are of worth in and of themselves and because they offer something to the interviewing experience. (Seidman, 1991, p. 71)

Each time the researcher-interviewer meets the informant, it is necessary to remind him/her where the interview will go and to offer explanations about the research. The relationship of rapport must be cultivated as well as controlled (Spradley, 1979; Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996).

Some researchers go further and suggest that the informant should also become a participant in working with the recorded material. Some suggest showing the interview transcripts to the intervewees to see if there is any part with which they might not be comfortable and would wish to have excluded from the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Riessman, 1993). The stances researchers take on this issue are wide ranging. At one end of the continuum are those who argue for a type of co-ownership. At the other end are those who suggest that the relationship ends with the interview and that the only obligations that the researcher has are to make sure the participant knew why he/she were being interviewed and to ascertain that the interview has not distorted the spirit or the content of what the participant said (Seidman, 1991). Since the Multiple Case Narrative is a research strategy which involves many more interviewees than in the other qualitative varieties, it is not

practical to involve all the interviewees in the later stages of the work. Thus we suggest that in the Multiple Case Narrative, the best relationship is that which succeeds in getting from the informants the appropriate information and keeping the spirit of what they said.

Involved observation

Principles of observation

While the interviews are indeed the primary sources of information in the Multiple Case Narrative, they are not the only ones. It is desirable to base each case narrative also on data stemming from diaries, notes, documents and mainly from observations, as we will explain later on in this section. While in the ethnographic tradition observation notes are seen as primary data (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000), in Multiple Case Narrative they are a source of secondary data. The observation in Multiple Case Narrative, like other sources of data gathering, is conducted according to the constructivist-narrative research approach, and it is very different from observation in the positivistic-quantitative research approach.

Observation in narrative inquiry is a systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The role of observation may be conceptualized on a continuum ranging from the observer as a complete outsider to the observer as a complete insider. What the researcher is able to see, hear, touch, taste, smell or feel is determined by the extent to which he/she is a participant and the degree to which he/she is involved. In the middle of the range between complete outsider and complete insider are several options of combining participation and involvement with observation: participant observation and involved observation, as illustrated in figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: *combinations of observation and participation*

Participation (and even involvement) and observation can be seen as competing and even conflicting objectives. In the positivistic-quantitative research approach, the preferred observation technique is of completely detached observation. The observer should be objective and use tools (such as a checklist of categories) to help him/herself focus the observation through the angle of theoretical hypotheses. The positivistic observer tries to be inconspicuous and even hidden if possible. On

the other side, in the ethnographic study the observer tries to participate (and not merely to be involved) in the life of the site and to function as a participant observer, to the extent that this does not conflict with his/her function as an observer and researcher (Jorgenson, 1989). Participant observation generally takes a long period of time and requires a high level of participation in the site under inquiry. Involved observation, by contrast, still demands a high level of involvement in the site, but usually takes less time and does not include any attempt to participate in the ongoing life and processes of the setting.

One of the principal advantages of participating while observing is the possibility of experiencing the world of daily life as an insider. Findings are more likely to be truthful as the researcher becomes involved directly and personally with people in their daily lives. Immersion in the setting allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The potential for misunderstanding and inaccurate observation increases as the researcher remains more aloof and distanced physically and socially from the subjects of study. Participation and involvement in the site increases the possibility of truthful observation, because through subjective involvement the researcher gains direct access to what people think, do, and feel from multiple perspectives (Mason, 1996). As outsiders looking in, we can get an overview of a scene, noting major and distinctive features, relationships, patterns, processes and events. The best commendation one can receive about the accuracy of one's attempts to understand a group and its ethos is perhaps from the group members. The world of everyday life as viewed from the standpoint of insiders is the fundamental reality which is to be described by observation.

> Where the researcher is located with respect to a phenomenon of interest determines what may be observed. From great distances phenomena look much different than they do from just a short distance away. They look different when viewed from different angles, such as from the side, the back, the top, or the bottom. […] Actions that appear to be totally meaningless from the social location of an outsider may be highly significant from the standpoint of an insider. (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 53)

Even more critically than in the case of interviews, our understanding and recognition of the culture and the language of the participants are determined by and determine our ability to observe accurately.

> Groups in interaction develop a large number of symbols imbued with inter-related meaning that collectively constitute a culture or subculture. Often, symbols that seem of the least significance to outsiders are the ones most redolent with meaning for participants. Such symbols may possess some alternative cultural significance for an observer, enabling reasonable, but false, interpretation. The observer, therefore, must attempt to see these symbols from the

> standpoint of the culture, rather than imposing on them the frameworks and understandings of other cultures within which the same symbols may have different meanings. (Woods, 1996, p. 39-40)

A group culture often has a certain ambience or ethos which the researcher needs to grasp. "It is not possible to acquire more than a very crude notion of the insiders' world, for instance, until you comprehend the culture and language that is used to communicate its meanings" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 14).

The observer initially encounters people in the field as strangers. These people experience the observer as an unfamiliar person even if they have some prior knowledge of his/her actual or assumed identity and purpose. The responses of insiders may range from hatred, hostility and dislike, to indifference, toleration, guarded cooperation, friendship and even great warmth and intimacy. Researchers need to normalize their presence in the field. Insiders do not expect a researcher to act as a member, and sometimes they may be offended if the researcher indeed does so. If necessary, we suggest providing sufficient information to avoid negative reactions to your presence. "Establishing and maintaining relationships based on trust and cooperation depend on the deliberate use of commonsense abilities and strategies for gaining rapport and making friends with people within particular situations" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 80).

Involved observation - in practice

The prevalent type of observation in ethnographic research is participant observation. In Multiple Case Narrative (as, of course, in some other qualitative varieties) where the researcher does not need prolonged observation and/or has not the time required for maximum immersion and participation in the explored site, we can consider involved observation. As mentioned, involved observation means a high level of involvement (but not ongoing participation) in the site. As represented in figure 5.1, on the scale between observation and participation it is possible to identify involved observation closer to the observation side, but it is absolutely different from the positivistic-quantitative method of 'pure observation'. The main difference between involved observation and participant observation depends on the amount of time spent at the site and consequently on the degree of our involvement / participation with the people in the site. Even in involved observation the observer can participate to some extent where this can be integrated spontaneously with his/her function as an observer. For example, in a case of observing in a classroom, the observer can help the students or teachers in their activities, or even function as one of the participants in an activity. Basically the postulates of the research approaches of involved observation and participant observation are the same. However, the

method of each style of observation can be quite different, as we will explain in the following sections.

As mentioned above, it is necessary in any constructivist-narrative research project for the researcher to get as close as possible to the culture and language which is being observed. While the ethnographer spends a large amount of time on site and thus has enough time to study the culture and language of the informants, the researcher in Multiple Case Narrative does not have the time necessary for this purpose. The researcher or group of researchers need to observe and to interview many single cases (which means many informants) and thus they do not have sufficient time to study deeply their culture and language. The only way to overcome this obstacle is for the researcher who wants to study any phenomenon to acquire as much prior knowledge and background information as possible on the culture and language of the people that he/she wants to investigate. For example, anyone who wants to explore lawyers at work, should know the world of law and its language well enough. In this case, lawyers are probably the preferred researchers. Likewise, anyone who wants to interview and observe teachers should be familiar with their world, and teachers are probably the preferred investigators for this purpose. Accordingly, in Multiple Case Narrative it is highly desirable that the researchers already know something of the culture and the main regularities of its cultural objectives. This is very important not only for a faithful understanding of what is being observed and said, but also for shortening the time for orientation to the observed site. It is easier, for instance, for those who are generally familiar with the school culture to decide which lessons they want to observe.

Observation begins the moment the observer makes contact with a potential field setting. It is extremely important to begin recording observations as soon as possible and in the greatest possible detail because never again will the researcher experience the setting as so utterly unfamiliar. It is important from the very beginning to remain open to the unexpected, even if the researchers have previous experience in the setting. If our previous experience and knowledge is confirmed by direct observation, we will have more powerful empirical evidence for these facts. Once the researcher is more familiar with the setting, it is appropriate to begin the 'formal' part of the observation, focusing attention on matters of specific interest.

The 'formal' part of the observation is the time during which the observers focus their attention on the phenomena / people they want to explore (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The focus of observation in Multiple Case Narrative is relatively narrow (particularly compared to ethnographic research, for example), and the observation is on bounded elements or components in the site observed (a physician in his/her clinic, a teacher in a lesson in a school, a meeting between a social worker and his/her patient, and the like). Once acquainted with the site they

want to observe, the researchers should decide on the boundaries of time and space. This bounded space and time is the 'observation unit'. As in the example above, an 'observation unit' in a school can be one lesson (which is located generally in a classroom for 45 minutes). Thus, the observers should decide on how many 'observation units' (lessons) they intend to acquire in the site. Generally, the number of observation units in the Multiple Case Narrative is quite limited. There are no hard and fast rules, but in most of our studies we limit ourselves to two observation units for each case (but generally, the total number of 'observation units' in each Multiple Case Narrative is quite large - at least several dozen).

It is recommended, wherever possible, to video or tape-record the observation. If the observed events are quite stable (such as a frontal lesson), the best way is to place the tape-recorder in an appropriate location and to let it record all the proceedings. In this case, the observer can take notes, especially on non-verbal happenings that the tape-recorder can't record. If the events are more active (such as in an interactive lesson, or in a gym lesson), the observer can move with the tape-recorder from place to place, but must still be able to take notes. The use of video-tape is more complicated, and it is recommended to use an assistant to do the filming so that the observer is free to observe, listen and write important notes. It is recommended to transcribe these recordings word for word. After the completion of the transcription, the researchers can match the transcriptions of the recorded material with the notes they took during observation.

In the course of observation, the researchers will encounter a wide array of modes of human communication, including many types of documents as well as artifacts, tools, machines, handicrafts and art. These products of human activity provide another potentially rich source of secondary research material. The observer should relate to such materials either by collecting examples or by taking notes. These materials can be used to stimulate memory and thereby enrich the informants' descriptions and meanings. (This issue will be expanded in the next section on the stimulated-recall interview).

Notes from the research field / Box 5.1
Protocol of involved observation

The following example is taken from research dealing with teaching culturally-valued subjects. During the phase of data collection, the researchers conducted involved observation in several classrooms. This example illustrates what kind of notes the researcher should take during the observation and how to organize the notes in the protocol of the observation

The transcript from the tape-recorder	The researcher's notes
Teacher: "We're trying to understand how their life-style changed - what stayed and what got thrown out, so to speak, when they came to Israel and became pioneers. Does anyone have any ideas?..."	The teacher hangs a placard on the board that shows an image of a Jew wearing clothing typical of Jews in the 19th century. Surrounding the image are other articles that represent the Jewish world: synagogue, communal institutions, Biblical verses, etc.
Student: "All clothes should be removed." Teacher: "Which clothes?" Student: "The hat." Teacher: "What else." Student: "The prayer book." Student: "All those black clothes, hardly anyone wears them anymore."	The pupils take off the hat. The children "undress" the image removing all its clothes and unique effects.

[taken from researcher' notes (Shkedi, 2001)

Stimulated-recall interview

Basically, the stimulated-recall interview is not a separate method but is an additional means of gathering data using interviews. We have chosen to discuss it separately and following our explanation on observation, because in Multiple Case Narrative, the stimulated-recall interview is based mainly on data collected in the observations (and, in a similar manner, from documents and other relevant items, taken from the observed site).

The technical aspects of the stimulated-recall interview

In narrative inquiry it is imperative that we understand what we have observed through the eyes of the participants. Basically, our transcriptions of the observation are useless without the stories, explanations and perspectives of the informants.

As mentioned, ethnographers seek after the perspectives of the participants by deep immersion in the site and a prolonged process of participant observation. In Multiple Case Narrative, as in some other qualitative research varieties where the researchers do not have enough time to perform continual participant observation, we need to find other appropriate ways to understand the meaning that the participants give to their activities. The stimulated-recall interview seems to be the best way to attain the informants' perspectives.

Obviously, the stimulated-recall interview is conducted after the observations. There are at least two ways to conduct a stimulated-recall interview based on observation transcripts. One is to present the transcript of the observation (or a viewing of the video-tape) to the informants and to ask them to explain their points of view. The interviewer (or the interviewee) can read the transcript aloud (or operate the tape recorder or the video tape) and the interviewer may ask the informants to stop the presentation every time they want to explain something. In the same way, the interviewer can initiate questions to clarify what is happening, why the events occurred and what is their significance in the eyes of the interviewees. If necessary, it is possible to go over some portions of the transcript or recordings more than once. The problem with this method is that it takes a long time and can be repetitive and boring.

Another option, which we find more effective, economical and focused, is to choose several episodes from the observation and to present them to the informants. In preparation for the stimulated-recall interview, the researcher chooses episodes from the transcription of the observation and marks each of them, or writes each of them on a separate card. During the stimulated-recall interview, the interviewer introduces the episodes to the informants, one at a time, and asks for explanations. When a video tape is used, the interviewer and the interviewees watch the episodes on the TV monitor together.

When using this method, it is best to start the interview by asking the informants general, descriptive questions ('grand tour questions', as explained above) to elicit their understanding of the observed activities. It is important both to get their general descriptive explanations and also to notice which parts of the observed events they mention. Many times, the stimulated-recall interview is conducted a few days after the observation. The reason for the 'delay' is that it takes this amount of time to listen carefully to the recording and then to transcribe it. Many informants initially find it difficult to remember the exact details of what happened in the observed activities. However, we find that when we introduce the episodes, they are able to remember even very small points and give explanations for them.

Another model of the stimulated-recall interview technique, which is quite similar to the use of transcribed episodes, is the presentation of portions of texts, documents or artifacts. These are things which were used by the informants or

referred to during the observation period whose meaning and purpose the researcher wants to understand from the point of view of the informants. If the informants explain the meaning and the context of each document or item, the researcher will have a more complete picture.

Place in the sequence of the research

Generally, the best way to integrate the stimulated-recall interview into the process of data collection of Multiple Case Narrative is to use it as one part of a continuous process. Ideally, the first phase of the research design is the interview (or interviews); the second is the observation (or observations); and the third phase is the stimulated-recall interview (which both allows explanation of the observation and clarifies issues and questions raised in the first interview). Unfortunately, in many cases the duration of the Multiple Case Narrative project does not allow for the researchers to have extended access to and contact with each one of the many informants. Challenges of time pressure and financial resources often do not allow for such follow up. In such cases, researchers who want to use observations and not only interviews in their research project, can limit themselves to conducting two phases of data collection. They should first conduct observations and then interview. This would allow them to combine in one session elements from the 'regular' interview with elements of the stimulated-recall interview.

Notes from the research field / Box 5.2

Stimulated-recall interview

The following episode is taken from a Bible lesson in an Israeli school. The subject of the lesson was the prophecies of Jeremiah. Ruth, the teacher, read the text from the book and after she completed the reading she asked the students to tell the story in their own words. One of the students summarizes the contents simply and briefly, and a discussion ensues:

Ruth: "What is the accusation? 'Bless God and the King', that is the accusation. Look at these five words. (she writes the words on the board).
Student: "To bless is in the positive sense."
Ruth: "Good, but that does not suit our story, because if Navot
blessed, then what is the accusation here?"
(Students throw out all kinds of ideas.)
Ruth: "The word 'bless' in the Bible has two meanings: positive, as we all know, and negative..."
Student: "To curse."
Ruth: Right... Navot cursed.

In a stimulated-recall interview Ruth reacts to this discussion:
It is not important to me that the children know every word, every meaning. It's

> important that they understand what is being read and that they understand the Bible better in general - To understand the story's message, and not to focus necessarily on the meaning of every word... As long as the standard of the discussion is maintained and they aren't just saying things thrown out into the air…
> *[taken from: Shkedi, 2002]*

Focus groups

The process of focus groups

Focus groups are basically group interviews, although not in the sense of a dialogue between the researcher's question and the informants' responses. Instead, the emphasis is on interactions within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher who typically takes on the role of a moderator. As with a group interview, the focus group combines elements of both individual interviews and participant or involved observation (Flick, 1998). The focus group provides access to forms of data that are not easily obtained by either of the other two methods. "The main advantage focus groups offer is the opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on the topic in a limited period of time" (Morgan, 1988, p. 15). Focus groups can be considered as primary sources of data because they afford access to descriptions and meanings directly from the informants. Focus groups produce fundamental data in the form of transcripts of the group discussions.

Interviewing skills are of crucial importance in focus group research because of the group dynamics that are present. However, "the skills that are required to conduct the group interview are not significantly different from those needed for individual interviews. The interviewer must be flexible, objective, empathic, persuasive, a good listener, and so on" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 652). However, the focus group method presents some problems not found in the individual interview. The interviewer must obtain responses from the entire group to ensure the fullest coverage of the topic. He or she must keep one or more participants from dominating the group and at the same time encourage recalcitrant informants to participate. "In addition, the interviewer must balance the directive, interviewer role with the role of moderator, which calls for the management of the dynamics of the group being interviewed; the group interviewer must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 652).

The focus group can be brainstorming sessions with little or no structure or direction from the interviewer. This type of focus group seems very appropriate for presenting and discussing triggered question (see types of interview question above in this chapter). Here we triggered the group interview by introducing the opinion of others, by confronting them with small written portions (taken from books, journals or newspapers), pictures, audio or video fragments and so on. In

such a group interview the participants trigger and enrich each other, and the final picture will include a wide range of meanings and interpretation of the topic under inquiry.

Place in the sequence of the research

The focus group can be an additional source of data for the Multiple Case Narrative. In some cases when the interviewer in the Multiple Case Narrative wants to enlarge the population of the research but does not have sufficient time or is unable to access as many populations as he/she would prefer, the focus group can substitute for individual interviews. However, the option of substituting individual interviews with a focus group makes sense only in situations in which the interviewer has a considerable number of interviews that he/she has already analyzed and has found the main issues of the research from these interviews. In this situation, and only in such a situation, can the researcher enlarge the source population of the Multiple Case Narrative by using a focus group. The focus group can also be triangulated with individual interviews, by conducting follow-ups with members of the focus group. The goal of triangulation is to strengthen the total research project (Morgan, 1988; Fontana and Frey, 2000). (For further discussion on triangulation, see chapter 13).

As mentioned in chapter 3, it is possible to use the focus group as a pilot study for the Multiple Case Narrative. This helps the researcher clarify the questions of the study (Morgan, 1988). In cases in which the researcher is relatively unfamiliar with the given topic or if issues of language are a problem, it would be advisable to hold a group discussion of the proposed points of interest prior to beginning the individual interviews and observations.

Conclusion

The method for data collection most prevalent in the Multiple Case Narrative is the in-depth interview. The purpose of the in-depth interview is to understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of their experience by helping them to construct and articulate their stories. Accordingly, the interviewer should conduct in-depth interviews with the informants and he/she should base the conversation on the language of the informants. The focus group is introduced as a kind of group interview. There are certain technical procedures that help the interviewer to conduct appropriate single interviews or focus groups. Six main types of questions are suggested: descriptive, meaning, comparison, complement, contrast and triggered questions.

In Multiple Case Narrative, observation is also used, although not as centrally as interviews. In this research strategy, compared to the centrality of the interviews, observation is a secondary source of data. The observation recommended is involved

observation, which means a high level of involvement (but not ongoing participation) in the site. Like in participant observation, the observer investigates from the inside, but the amount of time dedicated to each observation is much smaller. In order to understand the events that have been observed, the researchers seek explanations from the participant informants. The techniques of stimulated-recall interview are used for this purpose.

CHAPTER 6

PRINCIPLES OF DATA ANALYSIS

Chapters 6-11 are concerned with the issue of data analysis in the Multiple Case Narrative. This chapter is the first in that series of chapters and serves as an introduction. In this chapter we touch on several basic topics relevant to the issue of data analysis.

The analysis process and its products

The process of data analysis in the Multiple Case Narrative is systematic and deliberate in all of its procedures and has a set format of stages. This process upholds "the importance of 'transparency' – shareability – of management and analysis procedures" (Huberman and Miles, 1994, p. 428). This clear procedure challenges the criticism that qualitative research analysis is largely intuitive and based on the impressions of the researcher.

What is data analysis?

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and coherence to the mass of data collected (Mishler, 1986), and thereby arriving at an understanding of its meaning. In this process, we want to know how and why, as well as what (Dey, 1993). "The researcher is always faced with the analytical task of sorting and making sense of what is likely to be at first highly unstructured" (Pidgeon, 1996, p. 77). Analysis involves breaking data down into bits, and then reorganizing these bits in a new analytical order. Each such 'bit' is a unit of meaning. Without analysis, we would have to rely entirely on impressions and intuitions about the data as a whole. At the core of narrative analysis lies a twofold task: to select a bit of data, and assign it to a category. Units of meaning are identified by carefully reading through transcripts of interviews and observations, field notes and documents.

Analysis in narrative research may distinguish between two traditions: the structuralist analysis and the thematic analysis (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000). A structuralist analysis of narratives focuses on formal elements of narrative. It treats the text itself as an object of analysis, and includes methods of narrative

analysis and formal linguistic analysis (Mishler, 1986). The analyst orders all the possible elements that appear in the stories: events, protagonists, bystanders, situations, beginnings, endings, crises, moral conclusion; and the way they are arranged in a sequence that can be compared across the narratives and related to context variable. A thematic analysis treats text as a window into human experience and basically focuses on two major types. "In one, the text is segmented into its most basic meaningful components: words. In the other, meanings are found in large blocks of text" (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, p. 775).

Techniques for word analysis include key-words-in-context (finds all the places in the text where a particular word or phrase appears in the context of some number of words before and after), word counts, structural analysis, and cognitive maps. While these methods reduce text to its specific words and make it easy for researchers to identify general patterns and make comparisons across texts, they do remove words from the contexts in which they occur. As we explained in chapter 1, in the constructivist-narrative approach, the context is of critical importance and one cannot understand separate words outside of their immediate and peripheral context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, in the Multiple Case Narrative we use thematic analyzing with blocks of text (and not separate words) as the analysis unit.

The interactive nature of the analysis process.

No person can be undersood outside his/her culture; likewise no phenomenon can be understood outside of its culture. There is always tension between the informants' world as it is simply articulated and the unseen wider cultural context within which their lives exist. The more data is analyzed and explored in our own terms, the more we swing the pendulum away from the frames of meaning of our informants and the actual contexts in which these meanings occur. This introduces a paradox into our analysis: once the data is categorized, it becomes detached from its context, yet its context always remains paramount to understanding its meaning. The researcher should always keep this focus in mind (Araujo, 1995).

As explained in chapters 3-4, in Multiple Case Narrative the data is not gathered according to predetermined categories, although it is collected through a process that relates to the focus of the inquiry. Hypotheses are not generated a priori and thus the relevant variables for data collection are not predetermined. The hallmark of this work "consists of the researcher deriving his or her analytic categories directly from the data, not from preconceived concepts or hypotheses" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 32). However, the researcher does not necessarily begin the process of analysis empty-handed. Perspectives grounded in prior experiences may be available, but great care must be taken to ensure that these perspectives are appropriate for the now-to-be-investigated subject and context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

The levels of analysis.

Analysis is complete when the core variables are defined, the relationships amongst them are established, and they are integrated into a meaningful description, story line or grounded theory.

> Depending on the purposes of the investigator, the final conclusions drawn in the course of the research can vary greatly by level of abstraction. At the lowest levels they can be "descriptive" and at the highest levels, the researcher may aim for the most general theory. (Strauss, 1987, p. 4)

Strauss and Corbin (1990) propose three approaches to analyzing qualitative data that are instructive for researchers and readers of qualitative research. These three approaches to analysis can be thought of as being placed variously along a continuum ranging from a low level of interpretation and abstraction engaged in by the researcher, to the higher level of interpretation and abstraction required for theory building. The first approach, which they compare to the work of a journalist, is that taken by the researcher who intends to present the data with almost no analysis. The second approach is a more accurate descriptive work, and the purpose of the researcher is to present focused description. The third approach is concerned with building theory.

In this book we will suggest an analysis approach consisting of an analysis procedure which is based on continual stages. The suggested procedure borrows some techniques from the 'grounded theory' approach for analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983; 1990; Strauss, 1987; Straus and Corbin, 1990; 1994 and others). This approach is not limited to creating grounded theory as the only final product of the analysis; it can also yield a narrative description as the final product of the analysis. We suggest that on the same analysis procedure continuum, there are four continuum levels of analysis. Each level is constructed on the basis of the level 'below' it and cannot be constructed without this previous level of analysis. Thus, from the four levels of analysis, there are two potential products of the analysis in a hierarchy of abstraction and interpretation. Each of them can be a terminal stage of the analysis process depending on whether the purpose of the research is constructing a focused narrative description, or a narrative-based theory. These levels of analysis production will be discussed extensively in chapters 7-11.

The first steps of analysis

Qualitative research is conducted using many different methods of analysis: some are simple and informal, while others require sophisticated procedures. What are at hand are various levels of explicitness, abstraction, and systematization. "Interpretation is a process that inevitably pervades the whole research process,

from conception to reporting" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 169). At the beginning of a research project, when the researcher is involved in interviewing or observing an action, the analysis may be quite implicit.

> I have been engage in the process of interpretation from the very beginning of my research process. I do so in order to create my starting point – a conception of what my inquiry will be about. (Peshkin, 2000, p. 9)

Analysis occurs simultaneously with, as well as subsequent to, data collection. Over the entire period of data collection, there is a constant interaction between data collection and analysis. Analyzing data during the data collection process gives the researcher a clearer sense of the appropriate directions of the interviews, which questions to ask or where to focus the observation (Gall et al., 1996). "Analysis begins early" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515), so researchers need critical thinking skills as well as the ability to synthesize and evaluate information in real time. Those who first collect qualitative data and only then begin to apply an analysis framework to it are not being consistent with the constructivist-narrative approach (Rist, 1982; Strauss, 1987: Fetterman, 1989; Charmaz, 1990; 1995).

To begin analyzing the data, the researchers must carefully reread the data they have collected so far, including the notes they have taken. It is important that they become very familiar with this data in order to envision its potential (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). The aim of reading through our data is to prepare the ground for our 'formal' analysis. The transcripts should be read in their entirety several times and the researchers immerse themselves in the details in order to get a sense of the data as a whole – the larger picture - before breaking it into parts (Agar, 1980). This reading is not passive; it is a comprehensive analytical reading.

One technique used to try to understand the larger picture is to develop a set of questions to ask of the data: 'Who?' 'What?' 'When?' 'Where?' 'Why?' and 'How?' - questions which are the stock-in-trade of any analyst. 'So what?' is another stock question which is always worth asking, since it forces us to consider why some aspects of the data may seem more interesting than others. These questions can lead in all sorts of directions, opening up interesting avenues to explore in the data. Dey (1993) suggests that the action of the first reading of the data is comparable to that of hoeing in gardening. By digging over the ground, we loosen the soil making it possible for the seeds of our analysis to put down roots and grow.

Categorization in the analysis process

In this section we will explain the process of categorization in general, in order to get a brief overall picture. The full details of this process will be discussed in chapters 7-11.

> Coding is the heart and soul of whole-text-analysis. Coding forces the researcher to make judgments about the meaning and contiguous blocks of text. (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, p. 780)

categorization: a process of classification.

The process of grouping together segments of data that seem to pertain to the same phenomenon is called coding, or, as we prefer to call it, categorization. Categorization is based on classification; it is done by breaking down the data in order to make meaning out of it. Thus, classification is a conceptual process. Classification consists of two elements: it is a process of fragmenting the data into separate bits and then of assigning these 'bits' to categories or classes which bring them together again, if in a novel way. When we re-arrange the data according to our classifications, all the bits that 'belong' to a particular category are brought together. During this process, we begin to discern more clearly the criteria for allocating data to one category or another, and themes that characterized the data become apparent. Some categories may later be subdivided, and others subsumed under higher abstract categories. Without classifying the data, researchers have no way of knowing what it is that they are analyzing. Nor can they make meaningful comparisons between different elements of data. In generating categories, therefore, we have to think systematically and logically as well as creatively (Dey, 1993).

Through categorization the text segments are taken out of the chronological narrative form of the original interviews, observations or field notes (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Thus, as mentioned above, categorization represents two phases in which data is first broken down and conceptualized, and then put back together in new ways (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Charmaz, 1983). This crucial procedure makes sense of the data by analyzing the relevant phenomena found in the material. This is conducted by comparing the different pieces of data in order to find commonalties, differences and linkages between them (Seidel and Kelle, 1995). Strauss (1987) called this 'the concept-indicator model' and explained that it is based first of all on the constant comparison of indicator with indicator. That is: many indicators (or fragmented narratives) – descriptions of actions, events, beliefs, thoughts, and so on – are examined comparatively by the analyst who then categorizes them, naming them as indicators of a class of narrative fragments. He or she may give this class a name, thinking of it then as a category.

> Two analytic procedures are basic to the coding process […] The first pertains to the making of comparisons, the other to the asking of questions. (Strauss and Corbin 1990, p. 62)

Categorization as a way to expose and make meaning.

In order to make sense of the data and grasp its meanings, it is necessary to bring our implicit and explicit understanding to bear on the material. The

categorization process tells us what to look for and enables us to read the texts with intention and allocate the informant's words and sentences to 'categories'. This process of 'meaning making' through categorization is in fact interpretation (Ryan and Bernard, 2000; Gall, et al. 1996). Categories are the building blocks of our analysis. In narrative analysis, the first task is to make these building blocks. But building requires more than blocks and, indeed, in the second phase of the analytic method the blocks are brought together in order to construct the frame and make sense of the analyzed data. Gudmundsdottir (1996, p. 301) concluded that "Interpretation has been described as the 'exchange of one word for another' (Ormiston and Schrift, 1990) and as the 'grafting of one text upon another' (Derrida, 1974)."

Categories are the organizing tools which allow researchers to sort out the bits of data according to relevant characteristics. Narrative researchers are urged not merely to use categories but to develop data-driven categories, which mean categories, themes and patterns which emerge from the data. "The categories are various themes or perspectives that cut across the selected subtext and provide a means of classifying its units – whether words, sentences, or group of sentences" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 113). Categories offer not just a list of names but a conceptual structure. They are flexible containers for complex contents, like a structured thesaurus of ideas, of tentative concepts and their links to data, of emerging understandings. The list of qualitative categories is designed to maximize references to data in as many categories as the data demands (Richards and Richards, 1995). Categories do not serve primarily as denominators of certain phenomena but as heuristic devices for discovering meaning throughout the data (Seidel and Kelle, 1995).

The internal and external aspects of categories.

Categorization is not simply a matter of isolating and naming the categories but also of deciding how to dimensionalize them and discover their conditions, consequences, and associated interactions and strategies (Strauss, 1987). Creating categories in narrative data analysis presents a dual challenge: on the one hand, the categories must be empirically grounded and defined in relation to chunks of data. On the other hand, categories must be related to the wider conceptual frameworks which, in fact, acquire meaning only in relation to other categories. We could say that categories have two aspects, an internal aspect - they must be meaningful in relation to the data, and an external aspect - they must be meaningful in relation to the other categories. This means that in assigning something to one category, we do not automatically exclude it from others. We discount other possibilities, rather than exclude them altogether (Araujo, 1995; Dey, 1993).

> In qualitative data analysis, we have to come to terms with a series of paradoxes. Thus we want to use existing ideas, but not prejudge the data. We want to break the data up into bits, but also to analyze it as a whole. We want to consider data in context, but also to make comparisons. We want to divide data into categories, but also to consider how these relate. We want to be comprehensive, but also selective. We want to analyze singularities, but also to generalize. We want our accounts to be accessible, but also acceptable. We want to be rigorous, but also creative. (Dey, 1993, p. 266)

The naming of categories

Category names may be taken either from the natural language of the participants, called by Strauss and Corbin (1990) 'in-vivo' categories, or from the researcher's analytic interest (Charmaz, 1983; 1995). Categories taken from the substantive field world (of sociology, education, psychology, and so on) are those that are formulated by the researchers. These constructs are based on a combination of the researcher's scholarly knowledge, his/her own interests, and knowledge of the substantive field under study (Charmaz, 1995). The in-vivo categories are taken from or directly specified in the language used by actors in the field themselves. Researchers may use the exact words of their informants to construct the names for the categories. To do this, one has to read the subtext as openly as possible and to define the major content categories that emerge from reading.

In the first phases of the analysis, the researcher usually uses more in-vivo categories. During the course of the analysis, researchers may introduce more conceptual categories. These add scope by going beyond local meaning to broader concerns of substance.

> The name you choose is usually the one that seems most logically related to the data it represents, and should be graphic enough to remind you quickly of its referent.[…] Later if you come up with a more appropriate name, you can change the original. […] Some names will come from the pool of concepts that you already have from your disciplinary and professional reading. […] Another important source of names are the words and phrases used by informants themselves, catchy ones that immediately draw your attention to them. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, pp. 67-69)

Narrative categorization is not the same as positivist-quantitative categorization. Categorization that follows the positivistic-quantitative research approach requires preconceived, logically deduced categories into which the data is sorted. "Unlike quantitative research that requires data to fit into preconceived standardized codes, [in constructivist research] the researcher's interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). Constructivist-narrative categorization is the process of creating categories from an interpretation of the data. Narrative categorization requires the analyst to create or adapt concepts relevant to the data

(the informant's narrative) rather than to apply a set of pre-established rules (Dey, 1993; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 1983; 1995).

To conclude, categorizing brings together a number of units of data, which we consider similar in some respects, in implied contrast with other units of data. The researcher starts by carefully reading and analyzing a small amount of data. He or she analyzes the data using very detailed and complex procedures. During the analysis the researcher is continually asking questions of the data and constantly comparing different pieces of data one to another (Lonkila, 1995). As each new unit of meaning is selected for analysis, it is compared to all other units of meaning and subsequently grouped (categorized and coded) with similar units of meaning. In this process there is room for continuous refinement: initial categories are changed, merged, or scrapped; new categories are generated; and new relationships are discovered. In the categorizing process the researcher seeks to develop a set of categories that provide a reasonable coherence reconstruction of the data she or he has collected (Mishler, 1986; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). (The procedure of categorization will be discussed extensively in the following chapters).

Data management for analysis

Valid analysis is aided by data displays that are focused enough to permit viewing of the full range of data, and that are systematically arranged so as to follow the research questions at hand. Normally, the collected information is not immediately available for analysis, but requires some processing; audiotapes need to be transcribed, corrected, and edited. Similar processing may be required for videotapes. How data is stored and retrieved is at the heart of data management. Without a clear working scheme, data can easily be miscoded, mislabeled, mislinked or mislaid (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Several types of data can be distinguished: transcriptions (of interviews and observations), documents, raw field notes (journals), and interpretive/analytic notes produced by the researcher. As was explained previously, in the process of Multiple Case Narrative analysis, we divide the data into two main groups: primary data, (mainly interviews and dairies of the informants) and secondary data (mainly observations and documents). Each type of data will be analyzed in a different way.

At the core of the data management in the analysis stages is the process of data reduction. By data reduction we do not necessarily mean quantification, rather we mean the intentional selection of material in a purposeful, non-random, manner. In short, qualitative data can be reduced by a process of selection (Miles and Huberman, 1984). There are two types of data reduction: within each case narrative and between case narratives. The first is less common in Multiple Case Narrative; it occurs when researchers feel that there is too much non-relevant data for a case narrative and decide to cut it down on the basis of some kind of selection. The

second and more common type, is when researchers exclude those case narratives that do not contain enough material or narratives in which the informant was not cooperative. Alternatively they may cut some case narratives out altogether if they think that they have more cases than they need for the study.

Mindfulness to conceptual perspective

The role of mindfulness regarding perspective

Data analysis is a process of making meaning out of data. To analyze data we need to be mindful of our conceptual perspective, that is, the particular conceptual frameworks that orient our inquiry into the person and/or phenomenon. (For an extensive discussion on conceptual perspectives, see chapter 3). To do so, we have to bring our implicit and explicit understandings to the material (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). "This consists of disciplinary or professional knowledge, as well as both research and personal experiences, that the researcher brings to his or her inquiry" (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 280).

> Qualitative researchers do have a set of assumptions, criteria, decision rules and operations for working with data to decide when a given finding is established and meaningful. The problem is that these crucial underpinning of analysis remain mostly implicit, explained only allusively. (Miles and Huberman, 1984, p. 22)

Mindfulness to conceptual perspective is actually parallel to the concept of 'theoretical sensitivity' in the grounded theory tradition. Like theoretical sensitivity, it "refers to a personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of subtleties of meaning of data. One can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending upon previous reading and experience with or relevant to an area" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 41).

One source for mindfulness to perspective is the critical literature, which includes theory, research and documents. Professional experience is another source for mindfulness to perspective, as is personal experience (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The researcher's own background, interests and values will be influential in selecting a topic for research and in determining the researcher's attitudes toward the research subject. How researchers do their research work depends to a great extent on the kind of self they bring to the interpretation – their experiences, interests and values, personal reference groups, affective disposition toward those studied, commitment to causes involved in the research, and so forth (Woods, 1996; Mason, 1996).

Between conceptual perspective and data

Going into the field with non-explicit conceptual perspective could be problematic. We cannot analyze the data without mindfulness to our perspective,

but our mindfulness to perspective must be shaped and tested by the data we are analyzing. It is important to remain open to the widest possible range of findings, including the possibility that the researchers' initial ideas are inappropriate or completely mistaken (Jorgensen, 1989). The researcher's perspective is actually constructed in the researcher's head, but must be rigorously checked and rechecked against the incoming data. Seeking to discover, identify, and ask questions about these assumptions keeps the researchers thinking critically and refines their mindfulness to their perspective.

Categories are relations between our conceptual perspective and the data we have gathered through interview and observation transcripts, notes on observations, documentary sources, etc. (Araujo, 1995). Categorization of the data requires the development of a 'discussion' between conceptual perspectives and data. Categories should not be imposed upon the data arbitrarily; the categories adopted should, rather, reflect the data. The "investigator typically does not work with either a priori theory or variables; these are expected to emerge from the inquiry" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 203). At first, the data may appear to be a mass of confusing, unrelated accounts. It is through studying and analyzing it that the researchers begin to create order (Charmaz, 1983). Generating and developing categories is a process in which one moves back and forth between the categories and the data. The interaction between conceptual perspectives and data is crucial to the generation of a set of categories.

Researchers cannot analyze the data without a conceptual perspective, but, as said, their perspective must be shaped and tested by the data they are analyzing. This interaction informs narrative analysis from the outset, whether the analysis is based primarily on the conceptual perspective (through deduction) or on the data (through induction). In defining categories, therefore, the researchers should be both attentive and tentative - attentive to the data, and tentative as to their conceptualizations of it. They must be ready to extend or modify their criteria as the data demands.

> While coding we are constantly moving between inductive and deductive thinking. That is, we deductively propose statements of relationships or suggest possible properties and their dimensions when working with data, then actually attempt to verify what we have deduced against data as we compare incident with incident. There is a constant interplay between proposing and checking. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 111)

Sometimes, when the researchers check the data against their conceptual perspectives they conclude that the data in hand is not sufficient and that they need to collect more. Sometimes, neither the data actually collected nor the researcher's ideas are related to the original research objectives or topics (Charmaz, 1983).

Ways to notate the information

Writing memos

Besides taking field notes - informal ways of recording data by the researcher (see explanation in chapter 4) - throughout the whole research process, the researcher writes 'memos'. Memos are ongoing notes that assist the researchers not just to remember their ideas but also to maintain an ongoing process of deliberation. "Basically, memo-writing gives the researchers a tool for engaging in an extended on-going dialogue with self" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1169). This dialogue could, for example, be about his or her ideas about categories, their interrelations, new directions for the research, diagrams the researcher draws visualizing his or her thinking about the data, etc.

> Memos are written elaborations of ideas about the data and the coded categories. […] Through memo writing the questions developed in coding are put into analytic context. […] Memo writing takes place throughout the research process starting with the first interviews or observations. These early memos shape aspects of subsequent data collection; they point to areas the researcher could explore further. (Charmaz, 1983, p. 120)

Memoing should be a creative activity, relatively unencumbered by the rigors of logic and the requirements of corroborating evidence. Memos should be suggestive; they need not be conclusive. Memos may relate to any aspect of the data. "Their contents are not constrained in any way and can include: hunches; comments on new samples to be checked out; explanations of modifications to categories; emerging theoretical reflections; and links to the literature" (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996, p. 95). They may record pedantic points of information, or brilliant leaps of imagination. They can encompass a panoramic sweep of the data, or pinpoint minutiae (Dey, 1993).

Memoing goes hand in hand with reading the data. How well we read it may, in fact, determine how well we analyze it. The aim of reading through our data is to prepare the ground for its analysis. We need to record our impressions and ideas about the data in order to establish the bases for our formal analysis. The act of reading in narrative data analysis is not passive. We read to comprehend deeply. And we need to record our memos immediately, while we have the stimulated idea fresh in our mind and not even five minutes later when that flash of insight has literally flashed out of existence. Early memos provide concrete sources for comparison with materials gathered later (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Dey, 1993; Charmaz, 1983; 2000).

The analyst takes memos from the initial stage, the first step of the analysis process. Researchers write their memos in the margins of the transcript of the data. If we write on the same sheet, we make a clear connection between the data and our memo. However if we feel unduly intrusive and in danger of disrupting

the flow of information, we can use another sheet of paper for writing our memos. There is also the option of using the computer.

By making memos systematically while analyzing, the researcher fills out and builds the categories. Whenever writing a memo, researchers describe and discuss the category by delineating its properties as reflected in the data (Charmaz, 1983). Through memo writing the questions developed are put into an analytic context. Since it fosters a theoretical rendering of the data, memo writing is a useful strategy at various levels of theoretical development. Sorting memos simply means putting together those that elucidate the same category in order to clarify its dimensions and to distinguish it from other categories. When writing memos, researchers sometimes discover that they have defined new ideas that tie into their coded topic or category. As more data accumulates, researchers refine their earlier memos to account for greater variation, to gain a firmer grasp of the general context, and to understand the specific conditions under which the categories apply (Charmaz, 1995).

Category "tree"

Another means of notation in the analysis process is the category tree. The tree is a schematic representation of the categories. The sheer amount of material that researchers deal with in any research project, and especially in Multiple Case Narrative, is too great for easy control. The purpose of drawing the category tree is to enable the researcher to see the larger picture of the category map and to keep control of the analysis process. The single category at the top the of the hierarchy is paradoxically called its roots, and the name of the category located in the roots defines what the 'tree' is about. There are the 'bottom-up' or 'data driven' approaches, and the 'top-down' or 'theory-driven' approaches to building trees (Richards and Richards, 1995). Further explanations and examples of the category tree will be presented in chapters 7-11.

Construction of a story

During the analysis, the researcher searches for pieces of information (fragmented narratives) that contribute to the construction of a picture that provides an answer to the research questions. One way of helping researchers to crystallize their ideas is by configuring the elements of the data into a coherent story that unites it and gives it meaning, creating a story line of the ideas. Using a story as a guideline, the researcher can begin to arrange and rearrange the categories until they seem to fit the story, and to provide an analytic version of it (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This issue will be discussed further in chapters 7-11.

Use of the computer

> Traditionally, qualitative researchers have carried out the mechanics of analysis by hand: typing up field notes and interviews, photocopying them, "coding" by marking them up with markers or pencils, cutting and pasting the marked segments onto file cards, sorting and shuffling cards, and typing up their analyses. (Weitzman, 2000, pp. 803-804)

Today, the computer is a powerful tool for data analysis, and there are special programs for analyzing qualitative data (Weitzman and Miles, 1995). Many programs now allow the researcher to specify relationships in analysis and to write memos and link them to text and codes. Some programs allow the researcher to create links between different points in the text (hypertext) and several even allow the use of audio and video in place of, or in addition to, text. However, in constructivist-narrative inquiry, computers can help researchers but cannot serve as their substitute. The computer cannot break down the data into bits, or put the bits together again; only the researcher can do that. There are nevertheless several options for using the computer in the Multiple Case Narrative. However the use of such programs is dependent on their ability to be adapted to the specific analysis and interpretation approach being used (Flick, 1998).

Even a simple word-processing package will have facilities for helping the researcher in analyzing the data. At the most basic level, word processing is used for transcribing the data. The computer makes it easier to work with the text and to link data which seems related in some way. It is extremely convenient to use and the facility of 'cut and paste' is very helpful to rearrange the data according to its analyzing order, and to move pieces of data from one document to another in order to generate the story.

More sophisticated programs are the code-and-retrieve programs which are developed specially for the purpose of qualitative data analysis. These programs specialize in applying category codes to passages of text and the later retrieval and display of the text according to the coding. These program also have a search capacity, to scan and locate codes or words and phrases in the text. They furthermore have the capacity to store memos. Most sophisticated are the code-based theory-building programs, which go beyond the function of coding and retrieval in supporting the theory efforts. They do not build theory, but may allow for the representation of relations among categories, the building of higher-order classification and categories, and have more powerful memoing features and search and retrieval functions (Weitzman, 2000).

Electronic links between bits of data are often called 'hypertext links' or 'hypermedia links' or, in short, 'hyperlinks'. This tool performs all sorts of useful tricks, linking information in one place with relevant information elsewhere in the data. The hyperlink characteristics of computer-based analysis offer the prospect

of new standards in the reporting of qualitative research. The computer can be programmed to take note of all the main decisions made during analysis. Readers can see for themselves how concepts have been created, adapted or refined through the analytic process. We can link categories used in the analysis to a dictionary of definitions, so that others can always have direct access to how a category has been defined.

Data fragmentation results from procedures which segment the text. Text segments are isolated - conceptually and sometimes literally - from the surrounding text; they become 'recontextualized' in ways that abstract them from the original text. They acquire a new conceptual significance when juxtaposed against other coded segments. However, two important kinds of information are lost in the process. One is information on context, as the meaning of a segment depends on how it relates to the wider text. The other is information on how different segments of text are related to one another in the text, which influences our ability to analyze the range of relationships expressed within the data. By using the computer, we can link any 'bits' of data we are analyzing to the part of the text from which they have been extracted, so that when making comparisons between different bits of data we can always check on the data in its original context.

The limitation of using software programs

Software provides tools for searching, marking up, linking and reorganizing the data, as well as representing and sorting our own reflection, ideas, and theorizing. Thus, software can help us analyze qualitative data, but it cannot do the analysis for us, not in the same sense in which a statistical package can. Thus it is particularly important to emphasize that using software is not a substitute for mastering data analysis methods and being personally involved. Charmaz (2000) differentiates between several modes of qualitative research according to the degree to which sophisticated analysis programs may be applied to them. She argues that software analysis programs appear more suited for the qualitative-positivistic approach than for the qualitative-constructivist approch. In Multiple Case Narrative, which follows the constructivist approach, "part of interpretive work is gaining a sense of the whole – the whole interview, the whole story, the whole body of data. No matter how helpful computer programs may prove for managing the parts, we can see only their fragments on the screen" (Charmaz, 2000, pp. 520-521).

We recently developed new software for qualitative research analysis which based on the analysis procedure described in this book. For more information, refer to http://www.narralizer.com.

The use of quantitative methods

In opposition to some qualitative research varieties that draw a sharp distinction

between idiographic and nomothetic methods, in Multiple Case Narrative we recommend the use of quantitative research methods for certain aspects of the research process. There is indeed a tendency amongst many qualitative researchers to link qualitative and quantitative methods (Miles and Huberman, 1984; Huberman and Miles, 1994). This does not mean that the epistemological differences between the two methodological perspectives, and especially their different criteria for reliability and validity, are ignored (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Kuckartz, 1995). In the Multiple Case Narrative we need to describe many case narratives, and we can make good use of quantitative methods for this purpose. Researchers may find that at times, short quantitative descriptions are more focused and clearer in telling the story than long expressive descriptions.

Nevertheless, in the Multiple Case Narrative we cannot use quantitative methods in every study or for every purpose. We can use them only for those purposes that are consistent with the constructivist-narrative approach. Most often we use quantitative methods for descriptions that need to designate frequency, either through definite numbers or percentages. In the Multiple Case Narrative, we relate to many individual case narratives and make inferences by comparing them; therefore quantitative tools are sometimes appropriate. We can use simple statistical analysis tools to aid our narrative analysis and description. After a thorough examination of the material and careful categorization, an initial statistical analysis - as in counting the frequencies - can be conducted. Statistical analysis by means of frequency counts, with the result expressed as percentages, is certainly acceptable. Methods from statistics, such as the median, can also be appropriate as measures, for example, of central tendencies. However, elements of the General Linear Model, (such as variance, regression and factor analysis) as well as modern methods of linear structural analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, are certainly not suitable for this type of data analysis.

Even in cases in which narrative researchers use quantitative methods to describe their findings, the narrative nature of the research should be maintained. When the data is coded, the actual verbal responses should be preserved. Thus, while some quantitative procedures are useful in depicting the phenomena found in the study, the narrative dimension helps both to describe and to explain these phenomena.

Notes form the research field / Box 6.1

Using quantitative methods

The following example of using quantitative methods is taken from research dealing with teachers' use of the curriculum guide.
42 teachers participated in this narrative-based theory research. The description of teachers' answer to the main issues was accompanied by the representation of the proportional percentages of each answer. For example:

Do teachers use the teachers' guide?

47% answered "yes"
33% answered "no"
20% answered "not often" or "sometimes"
In the final report, these answers are accompanied by several samples of original verbal references which preserve the narrative nature of the research.

[taken from Shkedi, 1995]

Conclusion

This chapter serves as an introduction to the next five chapters which discuss the issue of data analysis. In this chapter we touched on several basic topics that are relevant to understanding all the issues of data analysis. Data analysis is the process of bringing order and structure to the mass of collected data, and thereby arriving at an understanding of its meaning. Analysis involves breaking data down into bits, and then rearranging them according to conceptual categories. The final narrative that is produced in the Multiple Case Narrative can be one of three types, depending on the purpose of the research: 'a journalistic description', a focused narrative description, or a narrative-based theory.

Categorization is the foundation of data analysis and it is based on grouping together segments of data that seem to pertain to the same story or phenomenon. Categorization is based on classification and is done by breaking down the data in order to make meaning out of it. This is conducted by comparing the different pieces of data in order to find commonalties, differences and linkage between them. Categories have two aspects: an internal aspect - they must be meaningful in relation to the data - and an external aspect - they must be meaningful in relation to the other categories. In order to prepare the data for analysis, the researchers arrange and display the data in an appropriate way.

A main element in data analysis is the researcher's conceptual perspective, that is the ability to see what there is with analytic depth. It is imperative that the researcher be conscious of his/her perspective throughout the research process. The sources for mindfulness to perspective are both the academic literature and the researchers' own background, interests and values. Mindfulness of one's own conceptual perspective is important in order to prevent it from overshadowing or disturbing the particular reality in the field.

We recommend writing memos during the analysis process in order to preserve any ideas stimulated by any stage of the analysis and to maintain an onging process of deliberation. It is also recommended to use figures of 'category trees' and to construct stories from the data in order to develop the whole picture of the analysis. Narrative researchers may also use the computer for their analysis and, in special circumstances, even use some quantitative methods.

CHAPTER 7

THE INITIAL STAGE OF ANALYSIS

In the process of collecting and analyzing data for the Multiple Case Narrative, we divide the data into two groups, primary and secondary data. As mentioned, primary data is data that we get directly from the informants. This is the data that is narrated, described, expressed, illustrated, portrayed, explained and interpreted by the informants themselves during interviews, in focus groups, diaries or in their direct explanations of the research observations. Secondary data is that which is gleaned about the informants (mainly through observations, documents and objects) and does not include their explanatory input or interpretations. The analysis of primary data is at the heart of the Multiple Case Narrative method.

The data analysis procedure suggested for the Multiple Case Narrative is divided into four stages: the initial, mapping, focused and theoretical stages. In this chapter we will explain the first stage which is the foundation of the analysis process. The other stages will be explained in the following chapters.

The procedure of the initial stage

The intial stage is the first step in the data analysis process. The initial stage is the least restricted stage of analyzing the data. However, this stage of analysis is subject to the same principle as the other three advanced stages. This stage is not free from the conceptual perspective of the researcher and the analysis process is the result of a 'continuous discussion' between the data, on one side, and the conceptual perspectives of the researcher and of the subject area on the other. The initial stage is that part of the analysis which pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through a close examination of the data. In the initial phase, researchers look for what they can discover and define in the data. The initial stage of analysis involves taking data (e.g. interview transcripts) and segmenting it into categories of information. Strauss and Corbin (1990) portray the initial phase of coding like beginning to work on a puzzle.

Firstly, the researcher must read a reasonable amount of the data, at the very least one entire interview. Based on the assumption that narrative inquiry relates to the data as holistic and contextual, this reading is done in order to give a holistic

orientation. This reading, however, is not the first encounter of the researcher with the data. The researcher is probably already familiar with the data from the process of data collection. During the first reading of the data, before starting the formal phase of the analysis, the researchers might read it rapidly through and come up with a few conceptual labels.

The aim of the initial stage of analysis is to open up the inquiry. Every interpretation and every category is tentative at this point. The categories are as yet entirely provisional (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). The categorization of materials in the initial stage is based on the informants' descriptions. Our categories directly relate to exactly what the informant said. Despite the fact that any analysis is an action of interpretation, it could be said that the act of dividing the data into categories in the initial stage is virtually interpretation free. (Obviously, though, even this initial analysis is an act of interpretive analysis.)

Strauss and Corbin, (1990) suggest several different ways of approaching the process of initial stage analysis. One might begin by applying a line-by-line analysis to the first interview or diary (Charmaz, 1995). One might also analyze by sentence or by paragraph (e.g. 'What is the major idea evidenced in this sentence or paragraph'). A third way is to work with an entire interview or a whole diary. During the initial stage the researchers scrutinize the data very closely, word by word, line by line, and sentence by sentence, but without losing the whole picture of all the data. "This form of coding helps us to remain attuned to our subjects' views of their realities, rather than assume that we share the same views and world" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). The data is broken down into discrete parts, examined closely, and compared for similarities and differences. The researcher tries to identify 'incidents', a few sentences (or even one sentence) that deal with the same matter. Each such incident may be regarded as a narrative fragment. Two analytic operations are basic to this analysis process: the making of comparisons and the asking of questions.

> […] giving each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon. […] We ask questions about each one, like: What is this? What does it represent? We compare incident with incident as we go along so that similar phenomena can be given the same name. Otherwise we would wind up with too many names and very confused! (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 63)

Giving names to the initial categories

As mentioned, the major source of primary data in Multiple Case Narrative is interviews. An interview is a type of discussion between the interviewer and the informant; a discussion based on questions and answers. The questions are the means by which the interviewer navigates the interview. They help the informants to construct and tell their stories. However, one of the characteristics of the in-

depth interview is that informant's answers are, by nature, not necessarily related directly to the interviewer's research questions.

When beginning the process of categorization, the researcher looks for in-vivo category names; terms used by the people who are being studied. "The use of particular terms derived directly from the interviewee's discourse will tie the analysis to the specific context of these data" (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996, p. 93). These names are provisional and can be changed if the researcher finds a more appropriate term. It is helpful to think about the name of the category as a question to which a specific portion of the material is the answer. A question like 'what are the responsibilities of the social worker?' could be suitable to a portion of an interview in which the informants talk about the social worker's responsibilities. The category can be the whole question or a short phrase as in 'social worker responsibility', or simply 'responsibility'. The researcher should mark every category and write its name in the margins of the pages of the text to be analyzed, (for example, the interview transcript). Our in-vivo categories should relate as closely as possible to the content of the text, and it is preferrable, if possible, to use the exact same terms as the informants.

It is not recommended to base the categories and the names of the categories on the interview questions. Sometimes, one long answer might be divided into two or more categories, and there may be categories which 'relate' to several separate questions. It is recommended to read every narrative very carefully, to try to understand what the informant meant to say, and to base the categories first and foremost on the informant's words. Even when the informant's answers appear at first glance to be related to the interviewer's questions, it is better to be skeptical and to examine the responses once more. Sometimes the informant's answer loses its context when separated from its connection to the original question; the researcher may not understand what was meant or lose the context of the comment without relating to the question that was posed. This is the case mainly when the answer is very short and relates directly to the question. Therefore, the analyst should be mindful of the questions during the process of analysis, while still remaining free to find an appropriate name for the categories which may have no connection to the interviewer's original question.

Notes from the research field / Box 7.1

The process of the initial categorization

The following exemplifies the process of initial categorization. The portions are taken from the middle of the original interview and omit some parts which are not necessary in order to understand the main idea. The original portions are much longer.
Amira, the informant, is a teacher with 18 years of experience. Amira teaches ninth grade Bible in a public school in Israel. There are 36 students in her class.

All of the following categories are formulated on the assumption that each represents Amira's conception of teaching Bible (the particular subject at hand). In order to label the categories concisely, we omitted the words 'Amira's conception of…' from most of the category names.

Question: Please tell me why you decided to be a Bible teacher?
Answer: I love Bible very much, I get excited...I think that studying Bible transforms us into people with roots, ...tied to the land of Israel, to religion, to the earth upon which we live, to our past...
Question: And what is your feeling after so many years… [Amira interrupted the interviewer]
Answer: In my opinion, the most fascinating book is the Book of Jeremiah. I like prophecy very much and I also think that I know how to teach it... You can understand my frustration when... I don't have time to teach my students all I want. There are a lot of important issues that I can't even touch… I try to press the students to do thorough work in the classroom, because that is the basis for analyzing texts… I persist. The students know that I am serious, very demanding, very consistent in my demands... Bible is something that the students aren't excited about yet, and so I feel like a frustrated policewoman.
Question: [the interviewer, trying to direct Amira, asks Do you see any hope?
Answer: ...At this age even if they are interested they won't say so. I think that at this age most of them do not like Bible, and it depends a lot on the teacher. If the teacher is interesting and prepares interesting lessons and ties them to topical issues, then certainly they have an attitude of respect...

Amira's conception of the Bible

schooling constraints

teaching demands

students' attitudes

the teachers' role

[taken from: Shkedi, 2002]

During initial categorization many different categories are identified. Some of these will pertain to the same phenomena. The researcher can give the same category name to the same phenomena in another portion of the interview. Sometimes, the researcher may come back to portions that have already been categorized and change the names of these categories in view of the names given to later portions. It is wise to write the name of the categories in pencil for easy alteration. However, at this level it is not necessary to be rigorous and consistent and to give the same name to the same phenomena everywhere. Sometimes is better to be open to many options without being limited by former names. The researcher can compare the portions and the names of the categories or leave that to the next stage of the

analysis, the mapping stage, where coherence between the categories will be made systematically.

It can happen that the researchers give two different category names to the same portion of the transcript (the same narrative fragment). The reason is that our informants tell their stories as integrated tales which relate at the same time to several different dimension of their world. Analysis that divides informants' stories into several self-contained, closed, components is an artificial intervention of the researchers in their search for a better understanding of the informants' stories and their meaning. Thus, the same portion of transcript can fall into two (or more) categories, as often happens (see example above in Box 7.1, the categories "teachers' role" and "students' attitudes" overlap, and both are applied to the same portions of the transcript).

Once the data is categorized, it can be detached from its context and explored in the researcher's own terms. Here we meet a paradox in our analysis: the more the data is categorized and explored in segmented form, the more we swing the pendulum away from the frames of meaning of the respondents and the contexts in which these meanings occur (Araujo, 1995). Words may possess different cultural significance to an observer, and hence encourage reasonable, but false, interpretation. Often, words or sentences that seem of little significance to outsiders are the ones most redolent with meaning for participants. The researcher, therefore, must attempt to see the data from the standpoint of the interviewee's culture, rather than imposing upon it frameworks or understandings from other cultures within which the same words or concepts may have different meanings (Woods 1996). Thus, while allocating the materials to categories, attention must always be paid to preserving the original meaning of concepts in addition to choosing in-vivo names of categories as much as possible, at least in the initial coding.

The extent of specification

In some research projects the researchers have preconceived ideas about the direction of the initial analysis. Under these circumstances, the researcher already has a general orientation in his/her selection of the categories. In such cases, the researcher can decide to limit (but not to cancel altogether) the stage of initial categorization, and perhaps not to follow all the steps of the initial stage. The researcher may base his/her initial categorization on a pre-prepared list of categories, while reading the material attentively to check whether these categories indeed correspond with the data, and be willing to create new categories in the event that this is 'called for'.

Sometimes the researcher analyzes materials that were collected over time. For example, one interview is conducted at the outset of the year and the second at the end of the year. The design of this research is probably intended to examine (and

compare) stories, attitudes, perspectives and meanings on the basis of their occurrence over time. In this case, in analyzing the first material, the researcher may have a list of initial categories, but must also be open to the possibility that the later interviews will raise new categories which are not found in the analysis of the first interview. In these circumstances, the researcher may return to the first interview to search for any expressions of the new categories in the already-analyzed interview.

Size of categories

It is important not to close off options of analysis at the initial stage by making distinctions between categories which are not based on a thorough review of all the relevant data. Rather than making rash judgements at the initial stage, it may be better to wait until all the data has been categorized into various broad categories. Sometimes it is preferable to adopt a strategy that starts with a few broad categories and then to find ways for progressively refining them. The emphasis here is on attempting to grasp basic themes in the data as a whole rather than to fragment them into smaller categories. Broad categories and their interconnections are then established from a general overview of the data, before a more detailed analysis fills in and refines them through the process of sub-categorization. This approach is most useful in studies in which the researchers do not have a preconceived picture of what they are looking for in the data. Once the data has been organized into broad categories, the analysis can move into the second (mapping) stage of analysis (Araujo, 1995; Dey 1993).

If the researchers have already determined the direction of the research, or if the research is a part of or an enhancement of a wider study, the analysis can begin with more narrow focused categories. Perhaps the most flexible approach is to develop 'middle-order' categories, which draw some broad preliminary distinctions within the data. None of these approaches has a monopoly on effectiveness, and whether one takes a holistic view, begins with a range of middle-order categories, or starts with smaller and more refined categories should be a function of pragmatism rather than of principle.

Initial categorization of many case narratives simultaneously

The Multiple Case Narrative investigates many stories of people (case narratives) in the same research project. Generally, the principles of initial analysis of one case narrative and of many are similar. In the initial analysis stage, the researcher categorizes each and every case (interview or diary) separately and with an equally open mind. The intention is not to force the categorization of the first case narratives on the later. Nonetheless, since all the cases generally deal with similar phenomena, the researchers often have a general idea of the probable categories for the whole

study. It must be supposed, too, that even without any pre-intention, the categorization of the first case narratives will reflect intuitively on the later ones, and thus many categories in each of the cases will be congruent. This intuitive process can be positive and fruitful if the researcher is attentive and sceptically open minded at all times, and does not relate to the analysis as a simple technical task.

Generally, the initial analysis stage ends when the researcher finishes categorizing all the case narratives. Sometimes the researcher can decide to limit the initial coding to only part of the material (for instance, to analyze 20-25 cases out of the 50). The main benefit of reducing the scope of the initial stage is to save time (and/or money). As mentioned above, the main goal of the initial coding is to establish the orientation and direction of the following stages of the analysis. Thus if, on the basis of the initial analysis of the sample case narratives, the researchers are confident that they already have a clear direction, they may go on to the second – mapping – stage of analysis of all the cases (including those that were not part of the sample of the initial analysis). The sample cases will be analyzed again with all other cases in the next stage of analysis, the mapping stage. If, during the mapping analysis, the researchers find some issues that were not raised in the initial stage, these must be added to the list of categories.

Validity and reliability.

In the second stage of analysis, the mapping stage, the researcher will develop a new system of categories based on the initial stage. As will be explained in the next chapter, many of the categories will be changed to a new alignment of categories. Nevertheless, the researchers should retain their transcripts with the initial categories indicated, as further checking and re-checking of them will be necessary. Documentation of the analytical process is also crucial because it serves not only as a trace to what has been done, but also as a prompt for further analysis (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996). This issue will be expanded in chapter 13 in the discussion of validity and reliability in qualitative research.

Conclusion

The initial categorization is the least restricted stage of analysis. It involves taking data and segmenting it into categories of information. The data is broken down into discrete parts and compared for similarities and differences with no need to find any apparent connection between the categories or to be consistent and coherent. The categories identified take into consideration the informants' cultural context. The names given to the categories are as close as possible to the terms used by the informants themselves. Although in the initial stage each case narrative is categorized separately, all cases are considered in the same conceptual

perspective and many have categories in common. The initial categories are provisional and serve as a basis for the next analysis stages. However, the researchers should keep their transcripts with the categories noted in the margin in order to check the trustworthiness of the whole process.

CHAPTER 8

THE MAPPING STAGE OF ANALYSIS

Mapping analysis is the second, conceptual, phase of the analysis process and follows the initial phase. The initial stage fractures the data and allows for an identification of categories without being necessarily consistent and coherent and without the need to find any apparent connection between the categories. While in the initial stage every case narrative is categorized separately, with, of course, a common conceptual perspective, in the mapping stage all the case narratives are categorized congruently. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main purpose of the initial stage is to get a general orientation from the material. In the mapping stage, the researcher "attempts to integrate the emerging categories by creating links between them" (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996), while sorting and grouping sets of related categories. Mapping analysis works intensively with the initial categories and puts the data in new ways by making connections both between the categories on a horizontal axis, and between the categories and their sub-categories on a vertical axis. In mapping analysis one tries to specify the relationship of the category in question to the other categories. Mapping analysis also forces the researcher to develop distinguishable categories rather than simply to label topics. The mapping categorization allows the researcher to access the full potential of the collected data.

Finding connections between the categories

In the mapping analysis stage, the researchers examine the categories that they generated in the initial stage and seek to find connections and/or relationships between them. Once the data has been analyzed in the initial categorization, we can examine more precisely the connections between categories and sub-categories. "Relations may be elaborated between superior and inferior categories (hierarchically) but also between concepts at the same level" (Flick, 1998, p. 179). Connecting categories is the analytic equivalent of putting mortar between building blocks. One common method is through identifying associations between different categories. By examining the associations between categories, we can begin to identify connections between them. By making category to category comparisons,

the analyst is forced into confronting similarities, differences, and degrees of consistency of meaning among the categories (Strauss, 1987). "By making such comparisons the researcher is sensitized to similarities and differences as a part of the exploration of the full range and complexity of a corpus of data" (Pidgeon, 1996, p. 78).

In the initial stage, almost all the categories were regarded at the same level. The researcher's attention was focused on exploring the contents of the data as much as possible. In the mapping stage the categories are divided into separate levels. As the researchers consider the initial categories and read the data included in each category carefully, they compare each to the other and locate each category on two axes: the horizontal and the vertical.

Ordering the categories on the vertical axis

On the vertical axis the researcher distinguishes between different levels of categories according to their relationships to each other. In other words, the researcher distinguishes between several levels of categories and sub-categories. For example: in the initial stage, the researcher identified the following categories in a study of student attitudes (the order in the list is arbitrary, as is common in the initial stage):

[1] students uninterested
[2] teachers' conception of students
[3] students enjoy
[4] students criticize
[5] students interested.

In the mapping analysis the researcher would notice that category No. 2 of the initial stage ("teachers' conception of students") could be a main category and the other four categories actually contain the specifics of this main category. These four categories thus become sub-categories as, illustrated in figure 8.1.

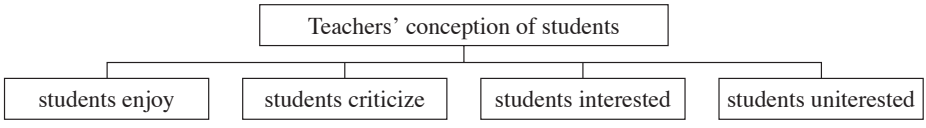


Figure 8.1: *Main category and its sub-categories*

In the same way the researcher could decide that the four sub-categories should be divided into two groups of categories: positive attitudes and negative attitudes. Thus the main category is divided into two sub-categories, and each of the sub-categories is further divided into two other sub-categories, as illustrated in figure 8.2. The specific mapping we arrive at reveals the characteristics of our data.

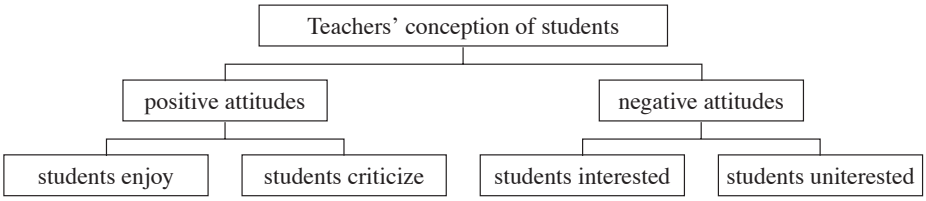


Figure 8.2: *Three levels of categories and sub-categories*

Ordering the categories on the horizontal axis

On the horizontal axis the researchers distinguish between several initial categories which all belong to the same main category. In this type of identification, the researchers consider the initial categories and decide which are actually close enough to be united into one category. At the same time, they may decide to divide one initial category into two or even more separate categories. This process is a consequence of careful reading and comparison between the categories. For example, as illustrated in the figures above, the researcher can decide that the following categories: 'students uninterested', 'students enjoy', 'students criticize', and 'students interested', belong to the same 'family', on the same horzontal level, because they deal with similar characteristics. While the categories are located in a 'family' relationship under the same main categories, new association categories that were not noticed in the initial stage can be added. It could happen that when the researcher read the segements of text that belong to each category, he/she notices that part of the text associated with a certain category actually has a different meaning than the text segments of the other categories. For example, during the mapping stage the researcher may identify and separate 'students unconnected' which was put in the initial categorization as part of 'students uninterested' into two discrete categories on the same level. In the same way, the researcher may notice that the content of the category 'students interested' can also be divided into two discrete categories: one is 'students interested' and the other is 'students initiate'. The new ordering of categories on the horizontal axis is illustrated in figure 8.3.

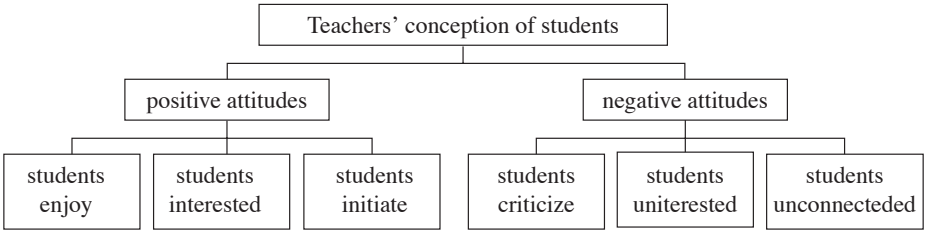


Figure 8.3: *New ordering of categories on the horizontal axis*

During the mapping categorization process, the horizontal and the vertical identifications are made simultaneously. It is also not unusual for the researchers to decide on new sets of categories, that are completely or partially different from the list of the initial categories and which reflect new references to the data. For example, the researcher comes back to the data, reads it several times and finds one or more new categories which belong to a family of, for example, 'students' difficulties', which had not been noticed in the initial stage. After the researcher identifies the new category, it is likely that the array of categories will be changed due to the new perception. Coming back to our example, illustrated in figure 8.4 below, the new category 'students' difficulties' will cause a change in the perception of two current categories: 'student uninterested' and 'student unconnected' (figure 8.3 above). These two categories will become part of the 'family' (main category) 'students' difficulties' with new names to reflect the new perceptions. 'Students uninterested' changes to 'students' motivation difficulties', and 'students unconnected' changes to 'students' cognitive difficulties'. The changes could be even more sweeping. Nevertheless, without the process of the initial categorization and the thoughtful reading of the data in the mapping stage, the researcher would probably not arrive at such new insights. In figure 8.4 below, the new array of categories is demonstrated.

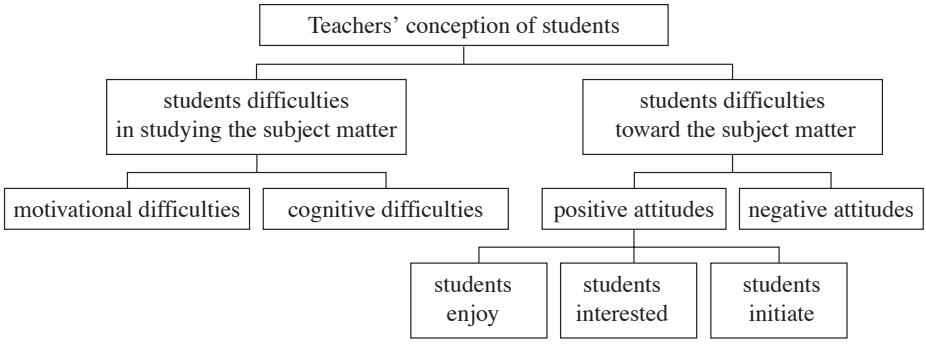


Figure 8.4 *New array of mapping categories*

From initial to mapping categorization

The mapping stage of analysis is a conceptual phase because the new ordering of the categories raises the sorting of data to an analytic level. The researcher may engage in the mapping stage of analysis of the same data many times as he or she identifies new questions to put to it. By showing the relationships between categories in ways that explain the people, issues and events studied, the mapping analysis provides the groundwork for developing deep descriptions and explanations. In addition, by charting the elements within each category, as well as the relationships

between categories, new and different research questions are stimulated (Charmaz, 1983).

In the initial analysis stage the researcher divided the material into separate categories and noted the name of each in the margins of the transcript. In this way it was possible to view the categories in their original contexts. In the mapping stage, the researcher detaches the categories from their original place and order, and builds a new conceptual order. Deep acquaintance with the material and serious work in the 'contextual' initial stage will supposedly avert improper interpretive analysis. In any event, even in the mapping analysis stage, as in the other subsequent stages, the researchers can return to the original transcripts and the initial list of categories whenever they feel the need to check themselves.

The nature of and relationships between the mapping categories

Four simultaneous steps of the mapping procedure

The actual process of mapping categorization through the procedures described above is quite complex. It is complex because the analysis is, in fact, made up of four distinct steps performed almost simultaneously.

i. In mapping categorization the questions we are asking are really questions about types of relationships. We compare one category against another, and ask how the categories might be related to one another. Figure 8.1 is a representation of the relationships between categories. For example, the category 'students enjoy', is one of the sub-categories, or one of the characteristics, of the category 'students' attitudes'.
ii. With these categories and relationships in mind, we then return to our data and to the initial categories to look for evidence that supports or refutes our new array of categories. Figure 8.4 is an example of a last phase in mapping categorization which introduces refinements (addition of new categories and switching the meaning of several current categories).
iii. While we are examining our data we continue to watch for evidence of properties that may reflect other relationships between categories. Again we are aiming for specificity, trying to locate and specify each category of data in terms of its exact characteristics. Figure 8.2 is an example of finding another definition of a relationship (in this case 'positive' and 'negative' attitudes).
iv. While we do our analysis, we try to find 'families' of categories, which are patterns in our data reflecting the properties of a phenomenon. Examples of such 'families' can found in figures 8.1-8.4 (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Sub-categories as the properties of a main category

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that sub-categories are the properties of the

category they relate to. For example, in relation to the example above, the two sub-categories 'students enjoy' and 'students interested' are properties of the category 'students' positive attitudes'. We glean the phenomena's characteristics directly from the informants' descriptions. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest characteristics of categories in several possibilities. We can find evidence of such characteristics in the stories of the informants. Some of the characteristics are:

[a] Causal conditions which indicate conditional information and are often pointed to in the data by terms such as: when, while, since, because, due to, on account of. A quotation from an interview serves as an example of causal condition characteristics relating to the category 'students' attitudes': "The frustration leads to lack of motivation and of willingness to work at it […] It's hard for them [the students] to grasp concepts that aren't part of their daily lives."

[b] Contextual conditions which are specific sets of properties related to the location of events and the particular set of conditions within which the phenomenon under study exists. Terms like 'where', 'under what condition' and so on are typical here. An example of contextual condition: "[When we teach Bible] in the third grade, it's [like] a story, it's enjoyable, it is like a novel […] there's excitement in the classroom. When we get into other things […] that are not particularly plot-oriented stories, that's when the difficulties begin."

(c) Intervening conditions are the broad and general conditions bearing upon the phenomenon's existence. These conditions include: time, space, culture, economic status, technological status, career, history, and individual biography. An example of intervening conditions: "At this age even if they [the students] are interested they won't say so. I think that at this age most of them do not like Bible […]"

Thus, the above three examples of sub-categories contain specifics of the dimensions of the categories they are related to. These suggested dimensions can help the researcher in the analysis of the informants' narratives.

The names of the mapping categories

As we emphasized, the initial analysis uses in-vivo language for its category names, taken directly from the narratives of the informants. In the mapping stage the researcher continues, as much as possible, to use in-vivo names, but need not always remain so tied to the original words of the informants. The reason for this is that in the mapping stage the researcher groups separate narrative fragments on the same subject into one united category or into one 'family' of categories. The researcher may also create broad terms for sectors of his/her categories as part of a process of conceptualization. In this case it is clear that not all of the category

names can be taken directly from the language of the informants. For example, while the categories 'students interested' and 'student enjoy' used our informants' terms, the category 'positive attitudes', which is added in the mapping stage as a 'parent' category, from which spring these two sub-categories, is more abstract and is not a term used by the informants. Even in the mapping analysis, however, researchers try to keep their category names as close as possible to the content of the data and to the language of the informants. The mapping stage is too early to choose pure conceptual-abstract category names. This will be done in the following stages. This rule ensures the qualitative validity and reliability of our analysis throughout the analytical process (this issue will be discussed in depth in chapter 13). Accordingly, the researcher should check him/herself by reading and re-reading the analyzed materials to be sure that the analysis and the category names have not strayed too far from the content of the material.

Building a 'tree' of categories

The large amount of material that the researchers deal with in any constructivist-qualitative research project (and especially in the Multiple Case Narrative) is generally not easy to control. We thus use graphic illustration as a way of representing the relationships and hierarchies between categories. These relationships can be represented in 'trees' because of their one-way branching, even if it is downwards and not upwards. Drawing the analyzing tree enables us to see the whole picture of the coding map and to keep control of the analysis process. The way that researchers conduct the analyzing process is reflected in the design of their trees. The tree is actually a graphic design of the process of mapping analysis. As mentioned, the single category at the top of the hierarchy is called its roots, and its name defines what the 'tree' is about. Every category in the tree indicates not just its characteristics but also its relation to those categories located above and below it.

The process of building trees is a reflection of the categorization direction. There is the 'bottom-up' or 'data driven' option and the 'top-down' or 'conceptual-driven' option of analysis direction and building trees. For example, if the researchers already know the direction of the research (as in evaluation research), or if the current research is a continuation of a wider study, they can move more in the direction of a 'top- down' representation. If the researcher does not have a clear idea of what he/she is looking for in the data (which is fairly common in narrative research), the direction of 'bottom-up' is more reasonable. If they start from several main categories or even one main category, the direction is 'top-down'; if they start more inductively, the direction is 'bottom-up'. Either direction is legitimate, has its methodological advantages and disadvantages, and can be more or less appropriate to the different types of projects (Richards and Richards,

1995). In most of the constructivist-qualitative projects the categorization direction is concurrently data-driven and conceptual-driven as illustrated in figure 8.5. Consequently, the tree is built 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' simultaneously. At some stages during the process of analysis, the emphasis is on one direction, and at others on the other. Once the categories have been organized and the tree has been designed, the researchers can move in either direction and refine their categorization.

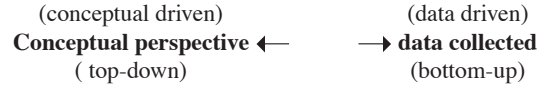


Figure 8.5: *Ways of consideration through the categorization process*

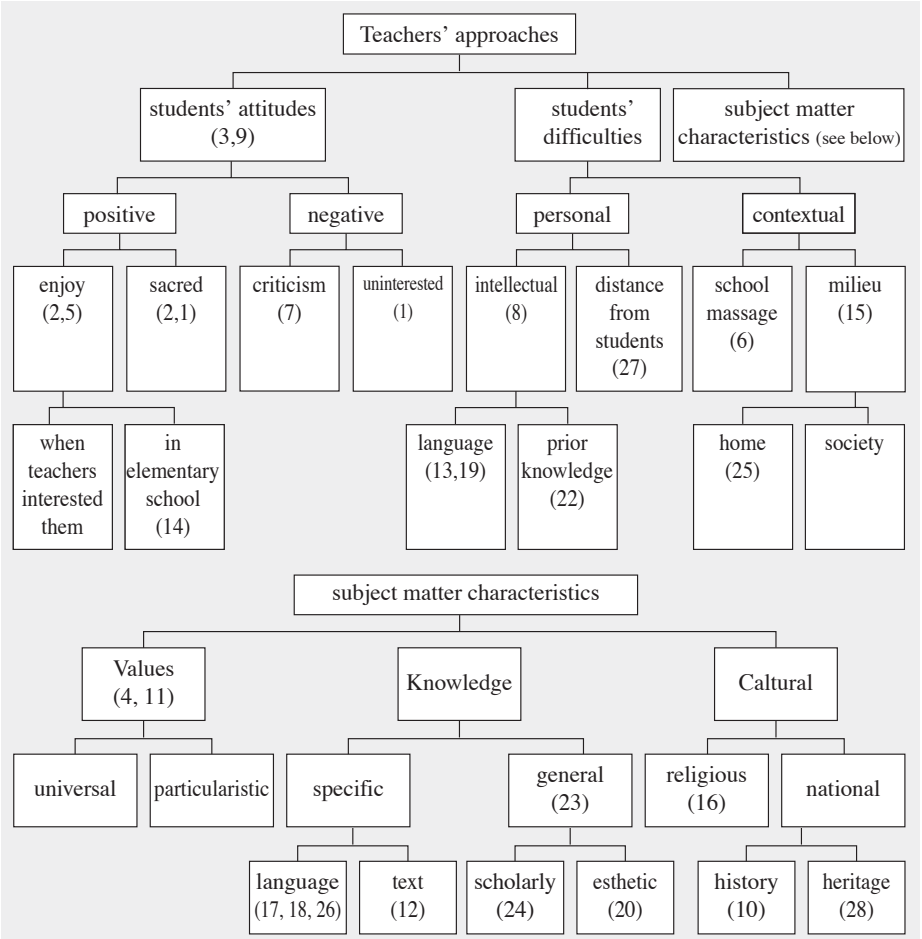
Notes from the research field / Box 8.1
From initial to mapping categorization

The following notes are taken from a study which deals with teachers' approaches toward teaching culturally valued texts. In-depth interviews were conducted twice with each of 52 teachers.

Partial list of the initial categories:
The following is a selected list of the categories determined in the initial phase. We choose to introduce those categories that we need for the representation of the mapping categorization process. The order of the categories in the list is arbitrary as is the case in the initial phase. The reader should notice that the names of the categories chosen by the researcher are oriented, in this stage of the analysis, for the uses of the researcher only. Thus, they may not be sufficiently clear to outside readers.

[1] students uninterested; [2] students enjoy; [3] students' attitudes; [4] values content; [5] student like; [6] less important in the school; [7] student criticism; [8] intellectual difficulties; [9] students' approaches; [10] national history; [11] moral issues; [12] cultural text; [13] difficult language; [14] preferred in elementary school; [15] negative messages; [16] religion; [17] treasure of words; [18] develop students' language; [19] unreadable text; [20] esthetic education; [21] students see the text as sacred; [22] lack of prior knowledge; [23] general knowledge; [24] cognitive development; [25] homes don't encourage; [26] development of student language; [27] foreigner knowledge; [28] heritage.

Following is the mapping categorization tree. The researcher divided all the categories into three main categories, each of which is divided into sub- categories on several levels. The original tree contained more categories and was more complicated. However, the picture presented in the following tree is quite reflective of the original study. We attached numbers to the codes that indicate their source from the initial coding list. Codes without numbers attached are new.



[taken from research notes (Shkedi, 1997)]

Re-documenting the data

Keeping the original context

After the mapping categorization stage is completed, the researcher can arrange the data in a new way according to the order of the tree. The researchers now extract the data from its original place and order (in the interview script or in the diary) and place it in a new configuration, reflected in the mapping analysis. This new array of data detaches the segments of data from their contexts, so their original meaning may be lost. There are several ways to preserve the context of the data. First, as mentioned above, the researcher should be careful to analyze the data

with sensitivity to the dimensions of context. Second, the researcher must keep the original transcripts for checking during the analysis process. Third, as the researcher extracts the data from its original place, it is recommended to take each piece of analyzed text together with additional pieces of data. It is preferable to take more rather than less. This additional data can include the researchers' questions, data that is located before and after the specific information in question and, if necessary, even the researchers' explanatory notes. Although these three techniques are helpful, they are no substitute for the deep involvement of the researchers and their conscious attention to the whole context of the phenomenon under inquiry.

Indication and content categories

In order to organize the mapping array of categories (the 'mapping tree') in a textual document, we may distinguish between two types of categories located in the tree. One type is 'indication categories', and the other is 'content categories'. Every category on the tree is either 'indication' or 'content' depending on its location on the tree. The indication categories indicate a characteristic of the phenomenon without connection to any special piece of content. The content categories not only indicate a characteristic of the phenomena but also contain elements of content. Only the lowest categories in the tree, the ones with no 'children', that are 'content categories'. Higher categories are designed not to hold content, but to provide organization and stipulate relationships between categories. Figure 8.6 is an illustration of the indication and content categories on the mapping tree.

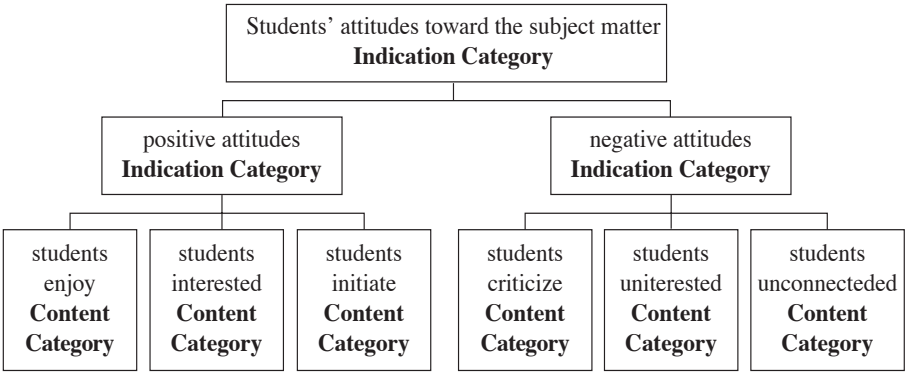


Figure 8.6: *Indication and content categories.*

The same categories can become either content or indication categories when the order of the categories is changed, as illustrated in figure 8.7 below.

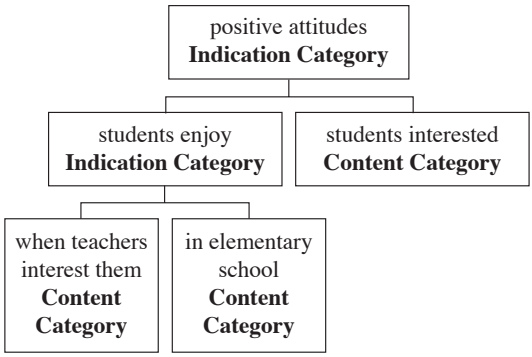


Figure 8.7: *Changing the type of categories*

In the example above (figure 8.7) the category 'students enjoy' is divided into two separate sub-categories and becomes an indication category instead of a content category. The two new categories are now content categories which contain some of the portions of text. At the same time, the status of the category 'student interested' (which is not divided) is not changed and remains a content category.

The mapping order of the data

We organize the data in the same order as it appears in the tree. We recommend using a computer (a word processor or special analysis program, as mentioned in chapter 6) to move the data from one document to other. The researchers list the categories in order from the highest to the lowest categories, as illustrated in the following 'notes from the research field' (Box 8.2). After the researchers write the main category at the top of the document, they continue to list 'branch' (each 'family' of categories) after 'branch'. Each 'branch' is organized and listed separately, from the higher categories to the categories. As mentioned above, only the lowest categories in the tree, the ones with no 'children', hold 'content', the portions of the data. Higher categories do not hold portions of content, but rather indicate the characteristics of the categories, their organization and the relationships between them.

Notes from the research field / Box 8.2

Re-documenting the data according to mapping categorization

These notes are taken from the same study cited above (Box 8.1). The following example is the setup of the mapping categorization tree represented in the previous box. The reader will notice the connection between the tree and the categories list that follows. We will put small pieces of data as an example of the place of the data in this order. In the

original research the number of pieces of data and the length of each is a great deal bigger. The names of the categories are given in their entirety, unlike in the tree.

Teachers' approaches towards teaching culturally valued texts:

1. Teachers' conceptions of students' attitudes
   - 1.A. Students' positive attitudes
     - 1.AI. students enjoy
       - 1.AI.a. Students enjoy in elementary school
         "In the third grade, it's a story, it's enjoyable, it's like a novel. In the third or fourth grade, the kids like Bible... There's excitement in the classroom. When we get into other things... that are not particularly plot-oriented stories, that's when the difficulties begin."
       - 1.AI.b. Students enjoy when teachers interest them
         "When you take an awkward text that looks strange, and you analyze it and suddenly they understand something about it, and there are all kinds of ideas, they like it..."
     - 1.AII. Students regard the subject matter as sacred
       "If a kid's Bible falls down, you'll often see the child kiss it... They feel it's something more exalted, different... He knows he has a connection with it, even subconsciously."
   - 1B. Students' negative attitudes
     - 1.BI. Students criticize the subject
       "It might be a disrespectful dismissal of the divine power: `Who is this God? And if He exists, why didn't He save the Jews from the Holocaust?'..."
     - 1.BII. Students not interested
       "Not interested, irrelevant, despite what I do, for the most part the text will interest some of the students, for most of the children it is not important... they make sure to shout out their lack of interest; usually: 'What do we have to do with this text?"
2. Teachers' conception of their students' difficulties
   - 2.A. Students' personal difficulties
     - 2.AI. Students' intellectual difficulties
       - 2.AI.a. Students' language difficulties
         "The words, the ideas are abstract... Middle school students' level of abstraction is not the highest, so it creates frustration. The frustration leads to lack of motivation and of willingness to work at it... It's hard for them to grasp concepts that aren't part of their daily lives..."
       - 2.AI.b. Students' difficulties due to deficient prior knowledge
         "not everyone can get close to a text like this… for them is like Chinese",
     - 2.AII. The subject matter is distant from the student.
       "The subjects are irrelevant to them in an emotional sense... why would a child be interested in the destruction of the Temple? ...How

can they identify with a people from whom they are removed by age and time?"

2.B. Students' contextual difficulties
- 2.BI. Students' difficulties in light of school messages
  "The kids are given the clearest message that the important subjects are math, English, and reading, and only those subjects turn up on the schedule in the first morning periods."
- 2.BII. Students' difficulties in light of milieu messages
  - 2.BII.a. Messages from students' homes
    "The home has a more decisive influence than we do in the school itself."
  - 2.BII.b. Messages coming from the society
    "The children come with prejudice they get from the television, newspapers, from the street…."

3. Teachers' conception of the subject matter characteristics

3.A. The values characteristic of the subject matter
- 3.AI. The subject matter contains universal values
  "The text deals with moral issues, it is relevant to everybody in any time."
- 3.AII. The subject matter contains particularistic values

3.B. The knowledge characteristics of the subject matter
- 3.BI. The subject matter contains specific knowledge
  - 3.BI.a. The subject matter contains language knowledge
    "The language is important…"
  - 3.BI.b. The subject matter contains special types of texts
    "The structure of the text itself is important... it communicates a whole world..."
- 3.BII. The subject matter contains general knowledge
  - 3.BII.a. The subject matter contains scholarly knowledge
    "There are things that can't be passed up,... everyone should know[it] the way they know the Iliad and the Odyssey..."
  - 3.BII.b. The subject matter contains esthetic issues
    "...Poems that have been written, if they derived inspiration from the Bible, it's possible and important to bring them..."

3.C. The cultural characteristics of the subject matter
- 3.CI. The subject matter contains religious issues
  "To teach a way of life, it's teaching faith, teaching commandments..."
- 3.CII. The subject matter contains national issues
  - 3.CII.a. The subject matter contains historical knowledge
    "the ancient history of the Jewish people, just as there is for any people, mythology... scripts which pass down from generation to generation..."
  - 3.CII.b. The subject matter contains knowledge about heritage
    "It's a common language for the Jew here and the Jew in any other country. They can talk about some story from the Bible, and they are talking about the same thing... ."

4. Teachers' conceptions of their role.
5. Teachers' conception of the way of teaching.
6. Teachers' conception of their personal and professional identity.
7. Teachers' conception of the place of school in society.
   (we will not present here the alignment of sub-categories of the last four main questions)

[taken from the research notes of Shkedi, 1997]

The dimensions of the 'content' categories

Each of the 'content' categories, the lowest categories in the tree with no sub-categories, can be identified according to its dimensions. Dimensions are the smallest unit of information analyzed in the analysis procedure. The researcher takes the characteristics of the categories and places them on a continuum to see the extreme possibilities of the category's characteristics (Creswell, 1998). There are at least two types of dimensions. One type is the prevalence of the characteristic. For example, in regard to the category 'Students' language difficulties', it is important to mark the prevalence of this characteristic. Does it appear always, often, sometimes, seldom or never? This information is very important and gives more meaning to the categories. Figure 8.8 illustrates this according to a sequence:

Teacher conception of Students' language difficulties

always -------- often -------- sometimes -------- seldom -------- never

***Figure 8.8**: The dimensions of content categories*

The meaning of such dimensional information is that in some case narratives (in this example each case narrative is a teacher) the informant's conception is that students always have language difficulties, while in other case narratives the conception may be, for example, that only seldom do they have such difficulties. Another type of dimensional information is the extent of the eminence of any characteristic. For example, in regard to the category 'The subject matter contains universal values', sometimes it is not enough to note the existence of this characteristic; it is also important to know the extent of this characteristic. Is it an eminent characteristic of the subject matter or just episodic, or perhaps something in between? This type of dimensional information is also organized along a continuum as in the example above.

In the Multiple Case Narrative, when we deal with many case narratives, the dimensions of prevalence and eminence are very important. During the mapping categorization, the researchers may notice that some categories appear in most - or even all - of the case narratives, while other categories appear in only a few – or

even just one – cases. In the mapping stage, it is suggested to relate to and retain all the categories rather than already making a selection. However it is very important to relate to the frequency of occurrence of each category, and to determine which categories are more and which are less dominant. Sometimes an absence of categories is as meaningful in terms of the overall picture of the research as the inferences made from a measure of the predominance of categories. However, it is important to remember that we as narrative researchers do not place as great a weight on "evidence by volume" as do, for example, positivistic-quantitative researchers.

There are many reasons why a category may not be evident. In Multiple Case Narrative, the data was collected using non-formatted methods, such as the non- or semi-structured in-depth interview. Despite the common focal issues, each interview developed in its own way. Therefore some categories may well appear in only a few of the narrative cases, or perhaps in only one of them. Thus, the absence or limited appearance of certain categories cannot lead to the conclusion that these phenomena are necessarily less dominant. On the other hand, the appearance of some categories in all or in almost all of the narrative cases can (and should) lead to the conclusion that these phenomena are indeed dominant. A comparison of the occurrence of categories in Multiple Case Narrative can prove useful, but it does not have the same weight or meaning as such a comparison in positivistic-quantitative research.

The system of organizing case narratives

There are at least two methods for the final organization of all the case narratives analyzed in the study. One option is the 'category oriented ordering' and the second is the 'case narrative oriented ordering' (Huberman and Miles, 1994). There is one more option, the 'group oriented ordering', which is a combination of the two methods. In the 'category oriented ordering', the researchers incorporate into one document all the data (taken from all the case narratives) that have been identified as belonging to each particular category. Through this method, the researcher may indicate next to each element of data which case narrative it was taken from. This type of ordering helps the researcher get a complete picture of the data without paying special attention to the differences and uniquenesses of each case narrative. Thereafter, the researchers can also order the data belonging to the same category according to the dimensions of eminence and/or prevalence. In the 'case narrative oriented ordering' each case narrative is organized in a separate document. The list of categories in all of them is, of course, the same and parallel. This method enables the researcher to preserve the context and uniqueness of every case narrative. The parallel ordering of the case narratives provides a comparison between them, and the researcher can indicate the dimensions of eminence and/or prevalence where it

is relevant. Finally, if the aim of the research project is to compare certain groups of case narratives, the researchers can use the 'group oriented ordering' in which they organize each group of case narratives in a separate document, while the list of the categories in all of them remains the same (for example, different groups of teachers, gynecologists, neurologists, dentists, cardiologists, in a comparative study). The researcher can also organize part of the data in one orientation method and other data in another orientation method. There is no preference and there are no special rules of organization for the data in the mapping stage; all depends on the particular research aims and the specific research designs of each research project.

The final steps of mapping categorization

Evaluating the mapping categorization

After the final (or even tentative) mapping categories' tree is generated and the data organized in a new mapping order, the researchers are able to envision the whole picture of the phenomenon under inquiry. In general, an indication of the richness of the data on any issue can be found in the amount of categories and sub-categories related to it. The researcher can note which characteristics of a phenomenon are more marked and which are less. Sometimes, the researcher decides to go back to the raw data to find additional categories for the mapping analysis or additional data for the existing categories. The mapping categorization is finished when the categories are verified and saturated. At this point, the researchers will have reached a complete mapping of categories which is illustrated in a categories tree. The whole picture of the data as it is represented through the mapping tree may lead the researcher to new thoughts about the direction of the research. Sometimes it may strengthen the anticipated directions, sometimes it may modify them, and sometimes the researcher may come to an entirely new vision. In many cases, it evokes new ideas for additional studies. The researcher may even decide to interrupt his/her analysis and to continue to collect data. This happens when the researchers realize they do not have enough data on the issues that interest them or that have become main matters of concern in consequence of the analysis.

Reducing the levels and/or extent of mapping categorization

The researchers can decide not to cover all the category options in the mapping stage but to move to the next stage of analysis, the focused categorization stage, before the mapping categorization is completed. In this case, the researchers delimit the mapping analysis to the higher levels of the categories. Since the mapping categorization is a starting point for the focused categorization, the researchers may decide to limit the levels of mapping analysis when they are not exactly sure how the analysis of the lower level categories should be developed in the next stage.

Sometimes, when the researchers deal with many case narratives, they can decide not to analyze all of them in the mapping analysis, but to focus only on a meaningful amount of case narratives. That will enable them to construct a mapping picture of the data. They can decide to analyze, for instance, 25 of 50 case narratives. The mapping picture (and its tree representation) of categories obtained from about 25 case narratives is a solid enough basis for the next stage of analysis. The same option can also be introduced in the initial stage, and the purpose in both cases is to save time and money. This decision is always reversible and, if it becomes necessary, the researchers can go back to the initial and mapping stages and apply them to all the other case narratives.

Journalist's description

If the goal of the researcher is to present a journalist's description (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) of the phenomenon under examination, they can relate to the mapping categorization as the terminal stage of the study. The nature of this type of description is to present the phenomenon with a minimum of involvement by the researcher. Usually, though, in an academic research project, the researchers do not limit themselves to journalistic descriptions as they wish to achieve more analytic understandings (This issue will be expanded in chapter 12).

Conclusion

While in the initial stage every case narrative is categorized separately, in the mapping stage, all the case narratives are categorized congruently. In order to see the whole picture and to keep control of the analysis process, the categorization can be represented in a 'tree'. In the mapping stage, the researchers seek to find connections between the categories on the horizontal and vertical axes on several levels of categories and their sub-categories. The lowest categories on the horizontal axis can be specified according to dimensions of prevalence or eminence. In this stage, the researchers continue to use, as much as possible, in-vivo names for the categories but, because the data and the categories are united into 'families', the researchers may create new broad terms for some of the categories.

There are the 'bottom-up' or 'data driven', and 'top down' or 'conceptual-driven' options of mapping categorization, depending on the particular circumstances of each research project. In most research projects, the direction is simultaneously bottom-up and top-down. In order to use the product of the mapping categorization in the subsequent stage of analysis, the researchers could use any of three methods for organizing all the case narratives: category oriented ordering, case narrative oriented ordering or group oriented ordering, or any combination of these three options depending of the purpose of the research project.

CHAPTER 9

THE FOCUSED STAGE OF ANALYSIS

In the previous chapters we discussed the first two stages of analysis. In this chapter we will discuss the focused stage (stage 3 of analysis) which in many cases (when our study purpose is a coherent focused narrative description) is the final stage of analysis. Focused categorization is the procedure through which the researcher focuses the elements of data into a coherent developmental account around a core category. As the name implies, in the focused stage researchers begin to formulate a clearer conception of the focus of their research. If the researchers wish to have a coherent focused narrative description as the final product of their research, the main categories of the focused analysis become the basis upon which to formulate (or reformulate) the research questions (see chapter 3 for a discussion of research questions).

In the mapping categorization, the foundation has been laid for the focused stage of analysis. The categories have been elaborated in terms of their salient properties as well as their relationships with other categories on the vertical and horizontal axes, giving them richness and density. In the focused categorization, the researcher selects what he/she considers to be the most important, central and rich category or categories (a 'core category') and aims at orienting the study around this core by specifying and validating the relationships between it and other categories.

Generating the core category

Theoretically, focused categorization can begin relatively early. The sense of core categories begins early in the first stages of analysis. Even during data collection, researchers can generally sense which categories have the potential to become core categories. This sense is strengthened during the initial and mapping stages. The analyst consciously looks for a core variable when analyzing data. While constantly comparing incidents, he or she will generate many categories, being alert to the one or two that might become the core. However, in determining the core category, it is preferable to wait until the researcher is able to construct the complete map of the research data. After the researchers have the whole picture

of the data, they can be relatively sure that the core category they have chosen is indeed the one which is the most appropriate and that has a backing of sufficient data and related categories (Riessman, 1993). Decisions made too early could be based on insufficient background and would therefore be less valid. We therefore suggest being rigorous and, for reasons of validity and reliability (in narrative terms), keeping to the sequential analysis order of the stages. In the meanwhile, during the former stages of analysis, researchers can write memos on the ideas they have about potential core categories.

The core category is the highest 'indication category' (see chapter 8). This core category is split into several main categories (also indication categories). Every main category is split into sub-categories, and these continue to be split to sub-sub categories. The terminal categories of the category array are content categories. Each content category is mapped on the tree under the indication categories to which it is connected. The core category is thus the indication category that reflects the general identity of the whole array of categories.

In the process of generating core categories, the analyst looks for the 'main theme': the category that has the potential to produce a coherent narrative (Mishler, 1986), what appears to be the main concern of, or problem for, the informants; what is going on in the data and the essence of relevance reflected in the data. Strauss (1987) suggested several criteria for judging which category should serve as the core category. [1] It must be central, that is related to as many other categories and their properties as possible. [2] It must appear frequently in the data. [3] It must relate easily to other categories. [4] It has clear implications for a more general explanation.

Sometimes, the researcher may have a sense of what the core category should be, but is unable to formulate it to his or her satisfaction. In such a case, a provisional label can be used until a better one can be formulated. After several workable categories are developed, the analyst attempts to decide on the most fruitful core categories, i.e. those which seem to have the optimum descriptive and explanatory power. If the analyst decides too rapidly, relying on a relatively small amount of data, there is a risk that he or she might end up with an undeveloped array of categories which has less integration and little explanatory power. The researchers might first look at their map of categories (from the mapping stage) to see if one of the current categories is broad enough to produce a coherent narrative and to encompass all characteristics of the phenomenon under inquiry. Sometimes they indeed already have such a category, which can now become the core category.

Technically, researchers can use the mapping tree to focus their considerations on the appropriate core category. Often, one of the main indication categories of the mapping analysis (one 'branch' of the mapping 'tree') could be the core category. The researchers may find that they can add several sub-categories to one of the

main categories in order to arrive at a meaningful core category. In this case, the researcher may decide to change the name of the main category in order to bring it into line with its new function as a core category. Sometimes, researchers notice that a combination of two or more main categories can yield a meaningful core category. In these circumstances, the core category is given a new broader name. It is not necessary that each main category 'brings' with it all sub-categories that originally belong to its 'family'. Every category and sub-category should be identified as to whether or not it still belongs to the new core category.

In some cases the researchers may decide to generate a new indication category which will serve as a core category. This core category does not come directly from any current main category (i.e. is not one of the original 'branches' of the mapping tree). However, its roots originate in the mapping stage, and its main categories and sub-categories are taken from the mapping categorization, even if in a new configuration. Thus, we cannot consider any option of generating a core category without the use of a mapping categorization array.

The core category and its sub-categories

Like the other categories, the core category must be developed in terms of its properties in such a way that the sub-categories are the expression of the properties of the core category. Once the properties of the core category are identified, the next step is to examine the relationship of the other categories to it, thereby making them appropriate subsidiary categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). To create categories in focus means that the analyst delimits categorization only to those categories which relate to the core category in sufficiently significant ways so as to be useful in creating a coherent narrative of the thick description type (Geertz, 1973). The relationships among categories and between sub-categories and the core category should become apparent. The core category must be proven over and over again by the prevalence of its relationships to other categories. The more data one has, the more certain one can become of the correct choice of core category (Strauss, 1987).

One way to identify the core category is to configure the elements of data into a coherent narrative that unites it and gives it meaning. The researcher searches for pieces of information that contribute to the construction of a story that will also provide an answer to the questions raised. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest a procedure for this process:

> One way to begin integrating is to sit down at the word process or typewriter, or with pencil and paper, and write in a few sentences the essence of your story. Ask yourself, what about this area of study seems most striking? What do I think is the main problem? Restricting your response to just a few sentences is important, for detail here would only confuse the issue. You simply want a general descriptive overview of the story. (p. 119)

Using a story as a guideline, the analyst can begin to arrange and rearrange the categories until they seem to fit the story, and to provide an analytic version of it. Congruently, arranging the categories according to the emerging coherent story serves to clarify and refine the story. If we tell the story properly, in addition to revealing the core category, the story should also indicate the properties of the core category.

In the process of passing from mapping categorization to focused categorization and the selection of a core category, some of the categories that existed in the mapping tree become less dominant, while others rise to greater prominence. It is true that some categories, and even several families of categories, will not appear in the new order under the core category. This does not mean that the researchers have decided to ignore parts of the data; rather, it means that those categories are not considered to be essential to the informants' narrative and to an understanding of the phenomenon. Those categories may serve as background categories, and some of them will even be mentioned in the descriptive report as part of the contextual picture (see chapter 12). It is obvious that choosing a different core category will bring yet other categories the fore, while the rest will fade into the background.

Researchers use a tree to express the relationships between categories in the focused stage too. The tree is actually the representative design of the process of focused categorization. The single category at the top of the hierarchy is the core category. During the process of focused analysis, the categories can move from their original places in the mapping tree. Several other types of changes may occur in the tree as well. A change can be in the naming of the categories in a way that expresses new insights about them. Two or more categories could be joined into one, or a single category could be divided into two or more separate categories. Part of the data that belonged to one category can be transferred to another; and some categories can be shifted from one 'family' ('branch' of the tree) to another, and so forth. All these changes are consequences of the generation of the core category and the construction of the narrative around it.

Several options for core categories

Often in Mulitiple Case Narrative (and perhaps also in other qualitative strategies), the researcher finds more than one dominant core category. Sometimes there are two or more core categories, each of which has the potential to sustain a coherent narrative. The researcher may ask him/herself if there may be a higher indication category that encompasses all the potential core categories. This new higher category becomes the core category; and the others are located below it and become its main categories. When the researchers can't find any category that encompasses all the potential core categories, we suggest that they choose one

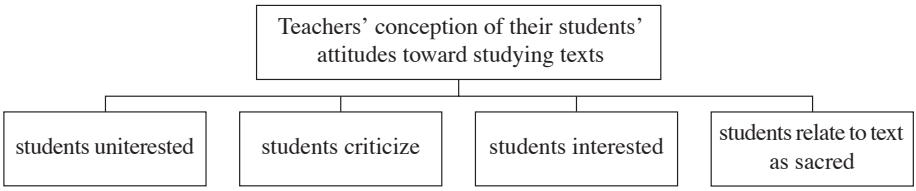
core category and focus the research around this. In other cases, the researchers may not want to utilize all potential categories, and wish to focus their research on a specific focused topic. This choice should be determined by the initial questions of the research, by the particular interests of the researchers, and by the richness of each category. In the Multiple Case Narrative, we almost always gather data which could sustain more than one coherent narrative and one research project. Often, research yields data that could serve the researchers not only in their immediate, specific project but also in many other analytical undertakings. Therefore we recommend holding on to the mapping tree as a stimulus for ideas for further research.

Sometimes researchers do not find any single core category that is broad enough to yield a meaningful coherent narrative addressing the research questions. Rather they may find two or more less broad categories, each of which is very pertinent to the aim of the study. These core categories are distinct from one another, and each is sufficiently endowed with indication and content sub-categories to yield a coherent focused narrative description. In these circumstances the researcher can decide to use two or more parallel core categories in the study. In this way, each core category yields a separate focused narrative description. Through the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis (which will be discussed in chapter 11), the researcher can consider how to present a full picture based on these separate narratives.

The conceptual frame of focused categorization

During the focused categorization process, researchers should update their review of the literature. Updating the review of literature can help researchers to focus themselves toward a rich and appropriate core category. Generally this is done in parallel to the ongoing process of identifying and choosing the core category and it therefore helps to determine the conceptual perspective of the research (see chapter 3). Both processes go on simultaneously and enrich one another. At the stage of focused analysis, the researcher uses the literature neither for selecting names for the categories nor for writing the focused narrative description but, rather, for providing the conceptual framework for the study.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the research questions in the Multiple Case Narrative (as in other constructivist-qualitative research strategies) are ever in the process of reformulation. As the study becomes more focused, the formulation of the research questions becomes clearer. Sometime, when the researchers wish to terminate their study with a focused narrative description, this stage of analysis yields the final version of the research question. The core category becomes the basis for the main research question; its main and sub categories may become its subordinate questions as illustrated in figure 9.1.



Here the main research question would be:
What are the teachers' conceptions of their students' attitudes towards studying text?

The subordinate questions would be:

i. According to the teachers, what do the students find uninteresting in studying texts?
ii. According to the teachers, what are the students' criticisms about studying text?
iii. According to the teachers, what interests the students in text-study?
iv. According to the teachers, what are the students' conceptions of the status of the text in the process of studying it?

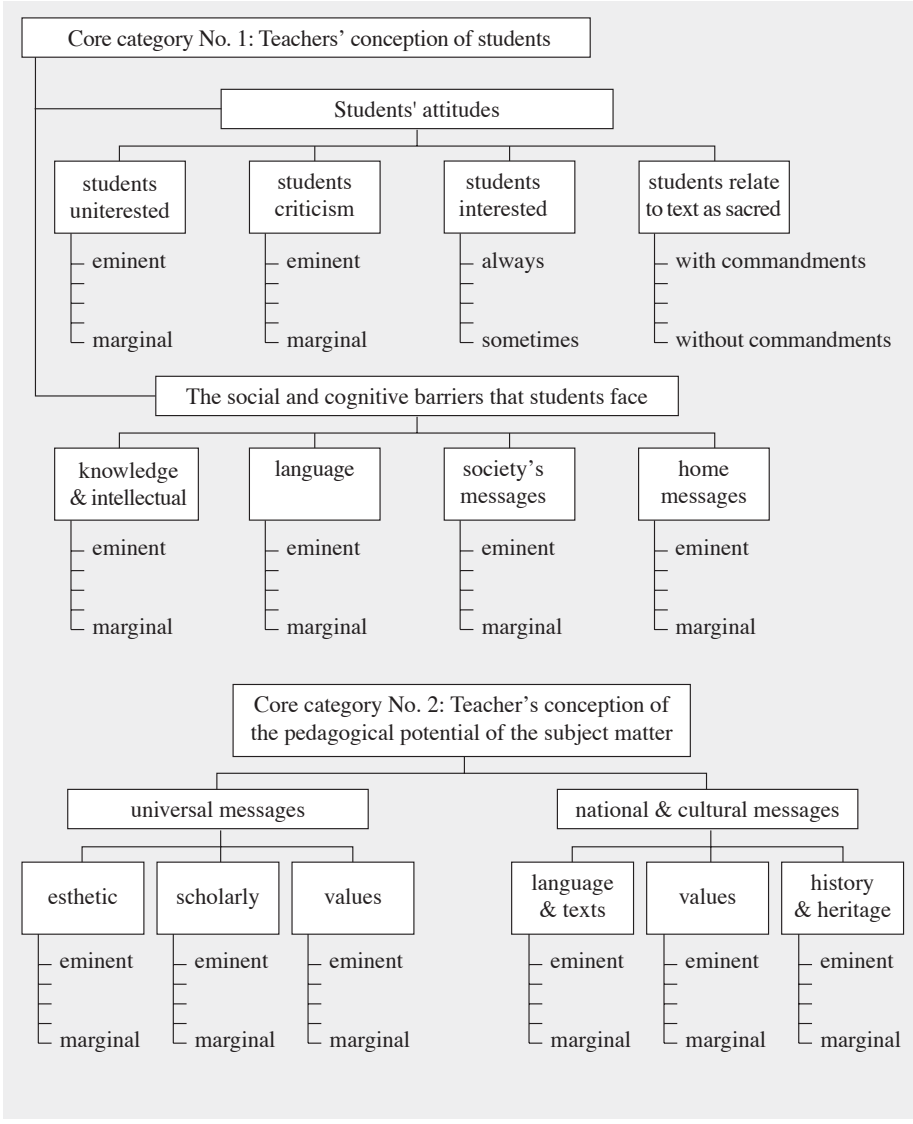
Figure 9.1: *The core and main categories and the research questions*

The dimensions of the categories

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, the researcher may divide the categories according to their dimensions still in the mapping stage. Nevertheless, it is more efficient to delay this analysis to the focused stage, until the researchers decide on the specific categories with which they will be dealing. The issues of dimensions of categories are illustrated in Box 9.1.

Notes from the research field / Box 9.1
Focused categorization

The following focused categorization is the continuation of the analysis process presented in the previous chapter, starting as an example of initial categorization (Box 7.1), and continuing with mapping categorization of the same material, (Box 8.1). The focused categorization reflects the changes that take place in the transition from mapping categorization to focused categorization. As mentioned above, the following notes are taken from a study which deals with teachers' conceptions of teaching culturally valued texts. It included 52 cases of teachers.
In this study, the researcher focused on two separate core categories as is represented below.



Each of the content categories, the lowest categories in the tree - those with no sub categories - are identified in the above example according to their dimensions. As we have mentioned in the previous chapter, dimensions are the smallest unit of information analyzed during the categorization procedure. The researcher takes the characteristics of the categories and places them on a continuum in which the extreme possibilities for the categories' characteristics become apparent. Most of

the categories in the example are classed according to the extent of the eminence of the characteristic ('eminent <-> marginal'). Thus, for example, in regard to the category 'esthetic' as a teacher's conception of the potential of the subject matter, in some case narratives the teachers express their belief that the esthetic dimension is very eminent in the subject matter, while in other case narratives teachers express their belief that it is only to one degree or another. In the same manner, one of the categories ('students interested') relates to prevalence of the characteristic ('always <-> sometimes'): is it 'always' evident or only 'sometimes' or somewhere in-between? Another category ('students relate to text as sacred') relates to the prevalence of a characteristic with an additional variable: 'with/without commandments'.

Patterns in focused categorization

In Multiple Case Narrative, as with other qualitative strategies that deal with several cases, it is desirable to find patterns under the core categories. During the stage of focused analysis, after arriving at a tentative picture of the focused categories, the researcher can determine patterns which are based on the 'correlation' between different categories. By 'correlation' we mean that some groups of case narratives are characterized by similarities and/or dimensional likenesses of several main categories. Sometimes the patterns are based on a classification of the case narratives according to the extent to which a certain characteristic of the core category is expressed in each case narrative. For example, in a study dealing with teaching culturally valued subjects, the teachers were divided into four groups in relation to their conceptions of their role in the teaching process. The pattern of the teachers' conceptions are: 'very involved', 'quite involved', 'slightly involved' and 'not involved'. The participants were classified accordingly. The criterion for determining such patterns depends on the existence of some characteristic in one group of case narratives, and the absence of such characteristics in other groups of cases. Or, more likely, the difference between several groups of case narratives depends on their place on the continuum from eminent to marginal or on the degree of prevalence of the characteristic from 'always' through 'sometimes' to 'never'. Such distinctions may yield two or more patterns, which bring significant meaning to the research. The names of the patterns in the level of focused analysis, like those of the categories, are still in in-vivo language style.

Notes from the research field / Box 9.2
Patterns in focused categorization

This example is taken from the same study that was discussed in box 9.1. The patterns represented below follow the focused categorization.

In the focused categorization, the researcher found three main patterns in teachers' perceptions of their students. These were grouped:
[a] Uninterested students
[b] Students with difficulties
[c] Cooperative students.
Almost every teacher (i.e. every case narrative) expressed each of these views: students uninterested, having difficulties and cooperative. However, in relation to the degree of eminence and prevalence of each such category, it was found that some teachers emphasized the view that students are uninterested; others gave more eminence to the students' difficulties; while yet others characterized their students as cooperative. In spite of the fact that almost all of the teachers articulated all the views, they may be distinguished according to their different emphases, which is the basis for suggesting meaningful patterns.

[taken from research notes of Shkedi, 1997]

Creating a focused narrative report.

The product of the focused stage is a coherent narrative that can be characterized as a "thick" description (Geertz, 1973). This narrative report is built around the core category and uses the families of categories that belong to it. Many narrative researchers, however, relate to creating a focused narrative report as the ultimate stage of narrative research. They consider the focused stage to be the last stage of analysis. From this point, they direct their efforts to creating a good and coherent narrative (this issue will be discussed in chapter 13). However, if they seek to present a theoretical picture of the phenomenon, they will continue to the next stage of analysis.

Conclusion

Focused categorization is the procedure following the mapping categorization and is based on it. It is the process through which the researcher organizes the categories into a story line, using a core category. In the process of generating core categories, the researchers use the mapping categories and look for the theme, concern or main problem that has the potential to yield a coherent narrative of the phenomenon under examination. The core category has its sub-categories which become the properties of the core category. Some of the mapping categories become more prominent in the focused stage, others are less dominant, and yet others may not even appear in the new focused order. It is possible to arrange the categories in

groups according to meaningful patterns. Each such group of case narratives reflects certain characteristics which are common to several case narratives and differentiate these from others. Sometimes the researchers find more than one dominant core category and have to decide whether to focus on one or on several simultaneously.

CHAPTER 10

THE THEORETICAL STAGES OF ANALYSIS: THE NARRATIVE-BASED THEORY

The major difference between the theoretical stage of analysis and the stage of focused analysis is that here the emphasis is put upon conceptual-theoretical descriptions and on explanations of the phenomenon under inquiry, while in the previous stage the emphasis was on constructing a focused narrative description.

Strauss and Corbin (1994) define a theory as a plausible relationship among concepts and sets of concepts. Good theory, Glaser (1978) suggests, has categories that fit (or have come to fit) the data; is relevant to the core of what is going on; can be used to explain, predict, and interpret what is going on; and is modifiable. It is possible to differentiate between several forms of theories and conceptual explanations. On one side are theories of greater abstraction and applicability, called midlevel theories, grand theories, or formal theories. On the other side is low level theory that is applicable to immediate situations only. This theory evolves from the study of a phenomenon situated in one particular situational context.

Narrative-based theory

The kind of theories that evolve from the study of specific phenomena are based on the informants' point of view. This theory "places great emphasis upon an attention to participants' own accounts of social and psychological events and of their associated local phenomenal and social worlds" (Pidgeon, 1996, p. 76). What informants say and their explanations for what they do, are the bases for building the theory. It is narrative-based theory because it is built from 'blocks' made up of fragments of the informants' narratives; fragments that express the "insider's points of view" on the phenomenon under inquiry. The assumption of such a process is that people indeed have theories and that behind their actions and words are some kind of theoretical structures. These are not necessarily coherent or consistent theories and do not include all the elements of 'good theory' suggested above (Glaser, 1978). In many cases the informants are not conscious of their own theories. These theories are based more on the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) of the informants rather than on their overt knowledge. During the interview, researchers

try to help the informants make the unconscious more conscious. They may succeed to a greater or lesser degree. However, the process is one of building theory based on the data that researchers have gathered. Compared to formal academic theories, which claim coherence and consistency together with other elements of 'good theory', the theory which is grounded in what informants raise is more 'lived theory', if we can paraphrase Billig et al's notions (1988).

Multiple Case Narrative is a type of constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). (See a fuller explanation in the section below). Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed the notion of 'grounded theory', or theory that is "inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23). It is termed 'grounded theory' because of its emphasis on the generation of theory from the data in which that theory is grounded (Strauss, 1987). In order to construct theory from data, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed a concept-indicator analyzing model, which directs the conceptual coding of a set of empirical indicators. The indicators "are actual data, such as behavioral actions and events, observed or described in documents and in the words of interviewees and informants. These data are indicators of a concept the analyst derived from them, at first provisionally but later with more certainty" (Strauss, 1987, p. 25).

> Grounded theory methodology is designed to guide researchers in producing theory that is "conceptually dense" that is, with many conceptual relationships. These relationships, stated as propositions, are, as in virtually all other qualitative research, presented in discursive form: They are embedded in a thick context of descriptive and conceptual writing. (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, p. 278)

Levels of theoretical interpretation

Strauss and Corbin (1994) point to several modes of qualitative interpretation running along the scale from "Let the informant speak and don't get in the way" (p. 278) through theme analysis, to the elucidation of patterns, theoretical frameworks or models (sometimes only loosely developed), and ultimately to theory formulated at various levels of abstraction. This scale discriminates not simply between description-laden and theory-laden qualitative analysis, but also between several levels of theoretical analysis. On one side, there is the more density theoretical interpretation, and on the other is the more loosely constructed theoretical interpretation. The traditional 'grounded theory' methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) claims to be conceptually dense with many conceptual relationships.

Charmaz (2000) distinguishes between two types of grounded theory: objectivist (or positivist and postpositivist) and constructivist grounded theory, and researchers can use these methods whether they are working from an objectivist or a

constructivist perspective. Charmaz argues that the traditional methodology of grounded theory, as developed by Glaser (1987) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), assumes an external reality that researchers can discover and record, which fits more closely with positivistic canons of traditional science. This methodology assumes that following a systematic set of methods leads one to discover reality and to construct a provisionally true, testable, and ultimately verifiable "theory" of it. In contrast "A constructivist approach to grounded theory reaffirms studying people in their natural settings and redirects qualitative research away from positivism" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510). "Moreover, a constructivist grounded theory fosters the development of qualitative traditions through the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522). Constructivist grounded theory reveals less density and more loosely theoretical interpretation than theory that is generated through the conceptions of the traditional-objectivist grounded theory.

Theoretical explanation

The theoretical analysis we suggest in this book is a type of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000). The theory we are attempting to construct from the case narratives is a low level theory that is applicable to immediate and specific situations only. This theory is the theoretical explanation for the specific body of case narratives under examination. This theory evolves from the study of a phenomenon situated in one particular situational context (Creswell, 1989). "The aim is not to reduce complexity by breaking it down into variables but rather to increase complexity by including context" (Flick, 1998, p. 41). Mason (1996) called this process "the 'theory comes last' view […] where the researcher will develop theoretical propositions or explanations out of the data […]" (p. 142). This is the researcher's theory on the way the people who experience the phenomenon perceived it.

> The 'grounded' nature of this research strategy is three-fold: (1) researchers attend closely to the data (which amounts to 'discoveries' for them when they study new topics or arenas), (2) their theoretical analyses build directly on their interpretations of processes within those data, and (3) they must ultimately compare their analyses with the extant literature and theory. (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1165)

In this book, we suggest a model of four stages of building such theories. Three have already been introduced: the initial, mapping and focused stages. The fourth stage, which we will introduce in this chapter, is based on the three former stages. In a systematic process through three successive stages, we have, thus far, examined the informants' narratives in order to extract the descriptions and explanations relevant to our investigation. Now we seek to take this process one step further

and to translate these narrative descriptions and explanations into theories which are grounded in the informants' authentic stories

> What is the difference between theory and description? […] First, theory uses concepts. Similar data are grouped and given conceptual labels. This means placing interpretations on the data. Second, the concepts are related by means of statements of relationship. In description, data may be organized according to themes. These themes may be conceptualizations of data, but are more likely to be a precis or summaries of words taken directly from the data. There is little, if any, interpretation of data. Nor is there any attempt to relate the themes to form a conceptual scheme. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 29)

The 'traditional' processes of building grounded theory, including the objectivist approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and the constructivist approach (Charmaz, 2000), both suggest a permanent process of going and coming back to gathering more information until the researchers have sufficient data to build substantial and dense theory. "Grounded theorists use their emerging theoretical categories to shape the data collection while in the field as well as to structure the analytic processes of coding, memo-making, integrating and writing developing theory" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162). In the Multiple Case Narrative we base our emerging theory on the informants' narratives. In the process of constructing narrative-based theory we indeed amass a large amount of data, but it would be pretentious to say that every time (or even that most times) we generate enough data to build a dense theory. Nor is this our goal. Instead, we aim to produce a theoretical explanation, which is sometimes similar to dense theory, and at other times more of a loose theory. The quality of the theory depends on the quality of the narratives we receive from the informants.

The construction of theoretical categories

Translating focused categorization into theoretical language

In the first three stages of categorization, researchers look for what they can discover in the data and they organize it into categories. In the theoretical categorization stage suggested here, researchers look for concepts and ideas in these constructed categories. The process of theoretical categorization is thus an "important intermediary in translating meaning from the frames of social actors into the frame of theoretical discourse" (Araujo, 1995, p. 97). "Once the researcher has developed a fresh set of categories, he or she can compare them with concepts in the literature and can begin to place his or her study appropriately within it. […] If they 'borrow' concepts from the literature, then they should ensure that these concepts merit a place in their analysis" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1163). By providing the pivotal link between the data and its theoretical rendering, categorization becomes the fundamental means of developing theoretical explanation. Thus,

categories may be treated as theoretical when they are developed analytically (Charmaz, 1983). The assumption is that the categories provide a fertile field for theoretical explanation. When reading the focused categories in order to translate them into theoretical categories, the researcher asks: 'What do I see going on here?' Seeking to discover, identify, and ask questions about the potential of the categories, the researcher thinks critically and definitively about what is implicit in the categories of data.

The generation of a theoretical explanation usually occurs around one (and sometimes more than one) core category. Most other categories and their properties are related to this core category, making it subject to much qualification and modification (Strauss, 1987). Technically, researchers try to translate categories - the core categories and other main categories - from every-day terms into theoretical terms as illustrated in figure 10.1.

***Figure 10.1**: The move from focused to theoretical categories*

The researchers identify the characteristics of each category and illustrate the relationships between them as shown in the focused categorization tree, on the horizontal and vertical axes, from top to bottom as well as laterally. Thereafter they seek to find theoretical explanations for these relationships. The theoretical terms of the higher categories (the core category and its sub categories) reflect the theoretical explanation of the relationships between the components (the lower categories) of the phenomenon under inquiry. As we move down from the top of the theoretical categorization, the names of the categories may be labeled in more every-day terms.

This approach to data analysis, the development of narrative-based theory, "requires the highest level of interpretation and abstraction from the data in order to arrive at the organizing concepts and tenets of a theory to explain the phenomenon of interest" (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, p. 122). This level of analysis is theoretical because the categories employed raise the sorting of data to a conceptual level. Theoretical categorization is not much different from the former analysis stages. It is simply done at a higher, more abstract level of categorization. By demonstrating the relationships between categories in ways that explain the issues and events studied, focused analysis forms the basis of and provides the groundwork for developing narrative-based theory. Even the former stages which were not focused directly on generating theoretical explanations, prepare the foundation for narrative-based theory. After collecting the data and analyzing it descriptively

during three stages, the researcher is confronted with the task of integrating his/her categories into a theoretical explanation. Narrative-based theory comprises richness of conceptual development and relationships, both of which rest on great familiarity with associated data and are systematically and routinely checked against this data. Thus, the process of translating descriptive categories into theoretical categories continues to be closely connected to the informants' narrative fragments. "A grounded theory analysis starts with data and remains close to data. Levels of abstraction are built directly upon the data and are checked and refined by gathering further data" (Charmaz, 1995, p. 28).

Changing the format of focused analysis

While considering the theoretical interpretation of the current focused analysis, the researchers do not necessarily preserve the format of the focused stage. The process of translating focused analysis into theoretical analysis is not merely one of changing terminologies. The researcher re-considers the data according to the new theoretical concepts and consequently may change the categories, alter the relationship between categories, cut one category into segments while uniting others, and/or dissolve families of categories and build others. As we discussed in previous chapters, there is a permanent 'dialogue' between the data on the one hand and the conceptual perspective on the other, and the categorization is the product of this dialogue. When one of the components, either the data or the conceptual perspective, is changed, a revision of the categorization is called for. In the stage of theoretical categorization, the conceptual perspective is changed and becomes more focused and theoretical, thus shedding new light on the whole picture of current categories. Therefore, in the process of theoretical analysis every change is legitimate unless it is not a consequence of the theoretical translation process.

The theoretical literature

The use of theoretical literature

As mentioned, we consult professional literature and other critical materials throughout all phases of the research. During the phases of data collection and the first three stages of data analysis, we use the literature mainly as an intermediate, to identify and focus our conceptual perspectives. We are careful not to bring the theoretical terms used in the literature to our current research. In the theoretical categorization stage, the picture changes completely, and we do indeed use concepts taken from the literature. In this stage, the researchers seek to explain the informants' narratives in the light of the theoretical frameworks that evolve during the research itself. "Raising terms to concepts means that the researcher takes a term or code, defines it succinctly and analyzes it. The wording of the term is important since the researcher now intends to treat it as a conceptual category, rather than merely

as a descriptive topic or code" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1168). The literature can be used to stimulate theoretical consciousness by providing concepts and relationships that can be then checked against the actual data.

> After developing their set of focused codes, the researchers may use knowledge of the literature to expand and clarify the codes and to sensitize themselves to ways of exploring the emerging analysis. […] The researcher uses the literature as a source of questions and comparisons rather than as a measure of truth. (Charmaz, 1983, p. 117)

Once the researchers come up with an idea, they may try to find more material in the professional literature in support of this idea. Researchers go back and forth from literature to data analysis in search of appropriate concepts and relationships.

It is possible that the researcher will find an already existing theory which can serve as a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under study and which is appropriate to its running categories. This possibility, however, is quite slight. The researchers' decision to use the constructivist-narrative approach rather than the positivistic-quantitative approach, is probably based on their presupposition that the phenomenon under examination, as expounded in the informants' stories, is unique, context-specific, dynamic and value-laden, and thus cannot be illustrated by any basic existing theory. It is more likely that the researchers will find the existing theories and all other critical material to be an inspiration for generating a unique narrative-based theory, which will be applicable to the particular people under study.

Translating and generating names for sub categories

The researcher may translate the name of a core category into a theoretical term taken from the literature as illustrated in figure 10.2. Sometimes the researchers use the same term as appears in the literature; at other times they may change the name and even generate an entirely new theoretical name.

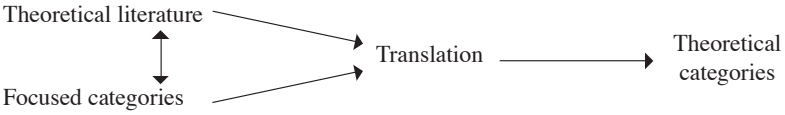


Figure 10.2: *Using the literature for constructing theoretical categories*

The core category is the central theoretical category. Within this core category, which is labeled either in an already existing conceptual term taken from the literature, or in a 'new' theoretical term generated by the researchers, there may be several main categories, each of them representing a 'family' of sub categories. The categories located under the theoretical core category are indication categories,

representing the characteristics of the narrative-based theory. They include sub-categories of actions, interactions or outcomes that emerge from the informants' narratives. Parts of these categories are already existent from the former stages of analysis. Sometimes they need to be reorganized into a new order that emphasizes the characteristics of the theoretical-conceptual core category. If necessary, the researcher can come back to the data in its former design (the initial and mapping stages) to find new evidence for the theoretical explanation.

The continual process of testing concepts against data

As the theoretical categorization process advances, the researcher develops an increasingly abstract and complex theoretical structure. This theoretical structure needs to be regularly checked against the data (which has already been analyzed in the focused stage) in order to verify that it is in fact supported by the data. To systematize and solidify connections we use a combination of inductive and deductive thinking, in which we constantly move between asking questions, generating presumptions, and making comparisons. Testing is crucially important and an integral part of the categorization process. It is built into each step of the process. We are continually comparing presumptions (the theoretical concepts) against reality (the data), making modifications and then testing again as is illustrated in figure 10.3:

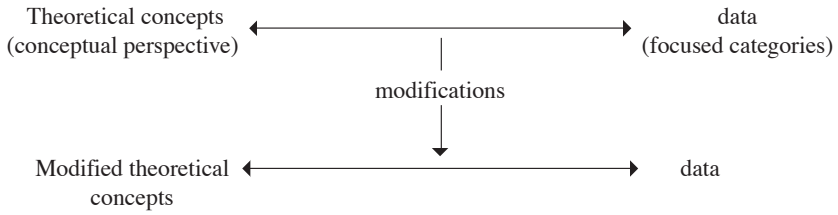


Figure 10.3: *Testing theoretical concepts against data*

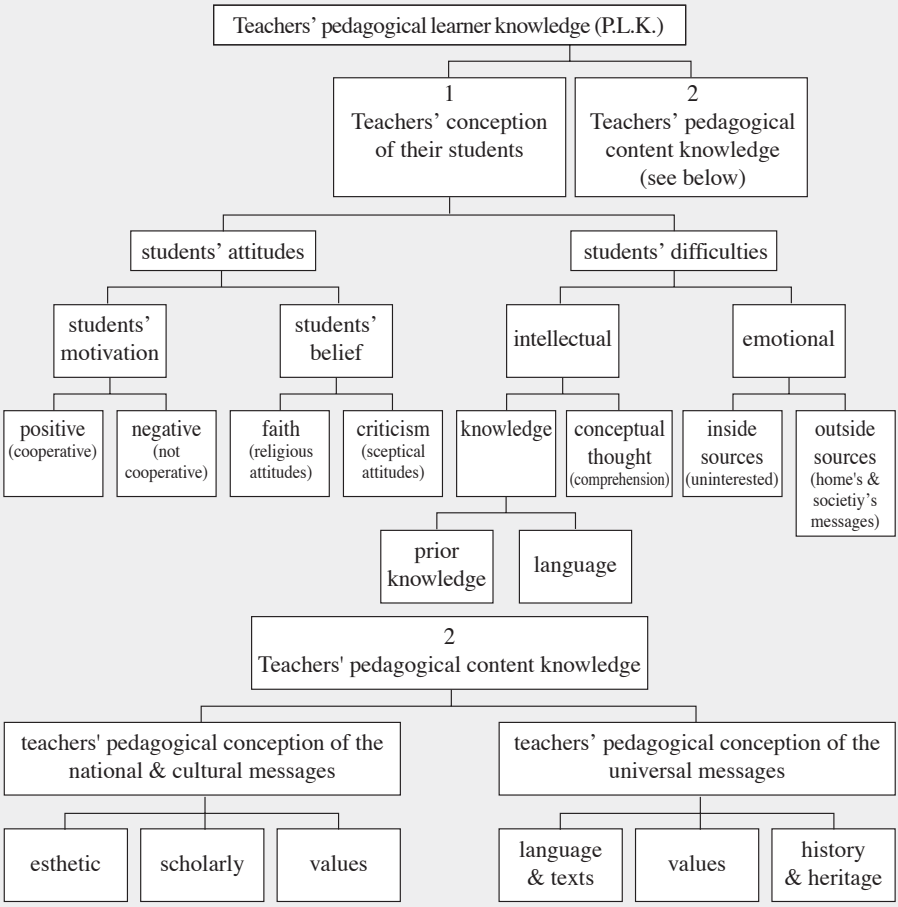
Narrative-based theory must always be traceable to the data that gave rise to it within the interactive context of data collection and analysis, in which the analyst is a crucially significant player (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1994; Lonkila, 1995).

> In short, the researcher-theorist is becoming increasingly theoretically sensitized, including, as noted earlier, scrutinizing the literature for received theories that might possibly be relevant to the emerging theory developed largely through the continuing conversation with "the data." (Strauss and Corbin 1994, p. 280)

Notes from the research field / Box 10.1

Theoretical categorization

The following example is a narrative-based theory based on the research data that we introduced in the previous boxes.



The narrative-based theory is based on the assumption that teachers' pedagogical learner knowledge, a term suggested by Grimmett and Mackinnon, (1992), emphasizes two components of teachers' conceptions. One relates to the way teachers perceive their students and explains how they grasp the subject matter as well as the difficulties they encounter in the learning process. The second component relates to the teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) which is the educational potential that the teachers believe is inherent in the subject matter.

[taken from research notes of Shkedi (1997)]

Theoretical story line

Once the researcher is committed to a coherent descriptive narrative, it is possible to move beyond description to conceptualization; that is, to the theoretical story line. It is time to tell the story analytically (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As was suggested for the process of developing focused analysis, so here too in the process of theoretical analysis, it is useful to sit down at the word processor (or with pencil and paper) and write a brief outline of the essence of the theoretical story. In writing a 'theoretical story', the researcher uses his/her tentative theoretical categories for building the organized story. The 'theoretical story' is, in a sense, a translation of the coherence descriptive story into its theoretical meaning. Often, the translation of the story into its theoretical meaning requires the researchers to change some of the aspect of the descriptive story in consideration of the new perspective. The theoretical story is a description of the phenomenon under examination raised to the theoretical level. It is the conceptualization of a coherence descriptive story about the central phenomenon.

Using the story as a guideline, the analyst can begin to arrange and rearrange the categories until they seem to fit a proper theoretical story, and to provide an analytical version of it. It is a theoretical story line in which we write the first conceptual-descriptive rendition of what the research is all about. The researcher searches for an order to the categories that contributes to the construction of a conceptual story, thus providing a coherent theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under examination. The researchers write a hypothetical statement regarding the relationships among the categories. Often, during the process of building a theoretical story line, the researchers may refine and even change the conceptual core categories as well as some of the main categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical patterns

As suggested in the focused categorization stage, it is desirable to find patterns among the analyzed conceptual core categories. During the theoretical analysis the researchers may find patterns which are based on the 'correlations' between specific categories. The ideas that generate these 'correlations' are taken from the literature but, like other categories in theoretical analysis, they should not necessarily be adopted unchanged and may become variants of the concepts found in the literature. The main principle for deciding on patterns is similar to that in the focused stage (see previous chapter), but now we use theoretical rather than everyday terms.

Notes from research field / Box 10.2

Theoretical patterns

The following example of theoretical patterns is taken from a study which examined the ideological approaches of teachers to their culturally valued subject matter. Researchers describe three ideologies:

1. *The disciplinary approach. (e.g. Schwab, 1964)*
2. *The normative-ideational approach. (e.g. Rosenak, 1987)*
3. *The cultural approach. (e.g. Schweid, 1995)*

These three patterns are taken from the already existing literature, but the patterns are not the same as they appear in the literature. The characteristics of the three patterns are consequences of a continuous discussion between the existing literature on the one hand and a deep immersion in the data on the other.

The characteristics of each pattern are supported by descriptions and explanations of the informants, accompanied by theoretical explanatory concepts. The following is an example of the sub-categories of the pattern 'The disciplinary approach':

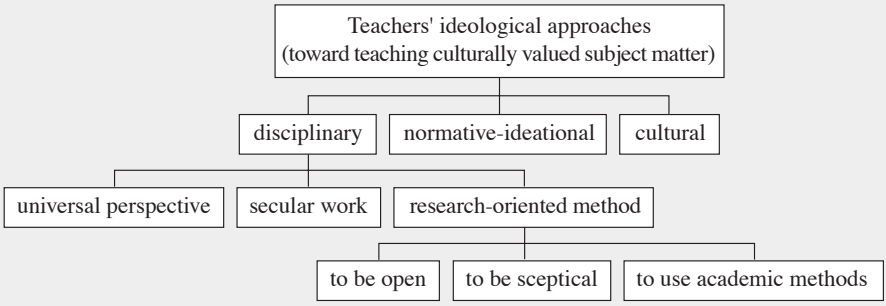
1.a Universal perspective
1.b A secular work
1.c A research-oriented method

The other two patterns are divided into sub categories in the same way.

While the labels of the three patterns (1, 2 and 3) use theoretical terms taken from already existing theories, the description and explanation in each (the sub-categories: e.g. 1a, 1b and 1c) use conceptual-theoretical terms that may indeed have appeared in the theoretical literature but not with identical terminology, meaning, order or combination as used by the researchers of this research data. When it comes to the sub sub-categories, the names of the categories are more in vivo language, using the informants words. The following is an example of the sub-categories of the sub-category 'A research- oriented method':

1c.I. to be open
1c.II. to be sceptical
1cIII. to use academic methods

Parts of this array of theoretical patterns are represented by the following tree:



[taken from Shkedi and Horenczyk, 1995)]

The final report

Completing the theoretical categorization enables the researchers to write the final report. Narrative-based theoretical description is different from the focused narrative description of the final report of the focused categorization, in which the emphasis is on description rather than on conceptualization (see chapters 9 and especially 12). While the focused narrative description is very close in its terms and style to every-day narratives, the narrative-based theoretical description, no matter which style we prefer, is not written only in day-to-day descriptive terms but also uses analytical concepts to describe the theoretical core category and the families of the categories that belong to it. The narrative-based theoretical description may use terminology in the final report which may not be recognized and/or liked by insiders (Woods, 1996). The preferred style of the theoretical categorization report is a theoretical description combining theoretical terminology with a thick description. In this way we make the research report more user-friendly, acceptable and valid. There is also the option of writing a more theoretical style report. The issue of writing the final report will be expanded in chapter 12.

Conclusion

In the theoretical stage of categorization, the emphasis is on constructing a narrative-based theory of the phenomena. This narrative-based theoretical description is based on the data that the researchers have gathered and the theoretical literature in the area of research. This process is a special type of 'grounded theory, i.e. a theory that is derived from the study of the informants' narratives itself. Technically, researchers translate categories – the core category and its sub categories - from every day terms into theoretical concepts. In order to give theoretical meaning to the categories, the researcher may change current categories, alter the relationships between categories, divide some categories into segments

CHAPTER 11

SECOND-ORDER THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

In Multiple Case Narrative we distinguish between two methods of theoretical analysis: first-order analysis and second-order analysis (Shkedi, 2004). Most often the researchers use the procedure of first-order analysis, but, at times, may need or wish to make use of the second-order procedure as well. In the previous chapter we explained the first-order analysis procedure; this chapter focuses on second-order theoretical analysis.

The reasons for using second-order analysis

First-order theoretical analysis is the process of constructing a narrative-based theory through the translation of descriptive categories into theoretical categories. This procedure is called 'first-order theoretical analysis' because we construct the theory directly from the data we gathered. In contrast, second-order theoretical analysis is used when the researchers find that they do not have enough data to construct their narrative-based theory through direct translation, and therefore need another method that allows them to construct the theory on the basis of the data they already have. Through the second-order analysis procedure we are able to connect disparate parts of data and to suggest theory on the basis of this data. Second-order analysis cannot be done without a well-developed first-order analysis.

Clearly, the more we interview the informants the greater the likelihood of revealing their hidden narratives. However, it is unrealistic to expect that in a relatively limited amount of time, the informants will construct all of their narratives and include in them all of their overt and tacit knowledge. The need for second-order theoretical analysis arises when the narrative fragments we receive directly from the informants (our primary data) are rich in allusions and references that hint at the informants' worlds. These hints and allusions challenge the researcher to construct strongly narrative-based theory through the procedure of second-order analysis.

An example of information that is difficult to achieve directly from the informants is given by Huberman and Miles (1994) in relation to causality, an issue that is not commonly raised in qualitative research:

> Can qualitative studies establish causal relationships at all? That possibility is often attacked from both the right ("Only controlled quantitative experiments can do that") and the left ("Causality is an unworkable concept in human behavior - people are not billiard balls") […] In effect, we get inside the black box; we can understand not just that a particular thing happened, but how and why it happened. The credibility of such claims depends on how one views causality. (Huberman and Miles, 1994, p. 434)

In the positivistic-quantitative approach the assumption is that "there are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37). On the other hand, the assumption of the constructivist-narrative approach is that "all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that is impossible to distinguish causes from effects" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37). In short, while the positivistic-quantitative approach argues for a linear relationship between cause and effect, the constructivist-narrative approach argues for a relationship of mutual influences. Second-order analysis does not overstep these assumptions of narrative research. It simply tries to expand their limits. Through the procedure of second-order analysis, the researcher can attempt to access many issues that are usually hidden inside the 'black box' of the deep consciousness of our informants.

> Second-order referents are created by establishing a causal pattern that integrates all the first-order referents into a meaningful whole, a narrative. The narrative is an interpretation of the text, which in turn is an interpretation of an earlier text. Interpretations are always inevitably interpretations of interpretations. (Gudmundsdottir, 1995, p. 33)

In order to clarify the frequent need for second-order analysis in Multiple Case Narrative, we will compare this research strategy to two other research traditions: ethnography and grounded theory, both of which do not use the procedure of second-order analysis. The ethnographic inquiry is based on participant observation, which is a process of long and continual immersion of the researchers in the site under inquiry (Spradley, 1979; Fetterman, 1989; Woods, 1996). Thus, the ethnographer can argue that he/she has spent sufficient time with the informants and was able to gather on the site under inquiry all the relevant data for building a theoretical explanation. Based on its methodological approach and design, the traditional grounded theory strategy (Strauss, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1994; Charmaz, 1983; 1995) also does not need to use second-order analysis. Traditional grounded theory involves a process of continually going back and forth to the field to gather more information until the researchers have sufficient data to build a substantial and dense theory. In the process of conducting narrative-based theory, we construct the theory on the basis of the infomants' narratives. While we may indeed amass a large amount of narratives, in many

instances, the data is not sufficient to build a theory through the procedure of first-order analysis.

The procedure of second-order theoretical analysis

All versions of second-order theoretical analysis are based on the focused analysis, and use the existing categories as building blocks for a new theoretical order and its meaning. While in the theoretical analysis of first-order categorization, the researcher translates the focused categorization to theoretical categorization, here the researcher converts the focused categorization into second-order theoretical categorization. While the process of first-order theoretical categorization is, in its essence, a process of direct translation of descriptive categories into theoretical concepts, the process of second-order theoretical categorization is a process of indirect conversion of the meaning of the existing system - in order to arrive at a new, abstract and more refined order of theoretical categorization. The difference between first-order and second-order theoretical categorization is illustrated in figure 11.1:

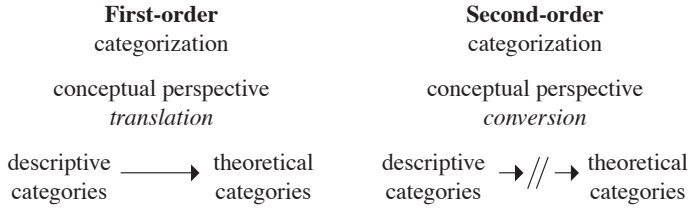


Figure 11.1: *The processes of theoretical categorization*

Considering the whole analysis picture in second-order theoretical analysis, the researcher actually finds new core theoretical categories which have not emerged directly from the existing focused categories. The researcher might find several hints in this direction in the informants' narrative, fragments but no massive evidence. Since the former stages of analysis were based on an interpretation of the data, in the second-order theoretical stage, the researcher can not arrive at interpretations that emerge directly from and are connected to the data. As is the case with any other narrative research finding, the second-order theoretical explanation is also based on the informants' narrative fragments, albeit not in as direct a way.

Basically, the procedure of the second-order theoretical analysis is not much different in its goals and most of its principles from the first-order theortical analysis. Both rest on a clear familiarity with the critical literature which is checked systematically against the data in a search for richness narrative-based theory. The

main theoretical idea revolves around core categories. Other categories and their properties are related to the core categories. As with the first-order theoretical stage, the researchers here examine the core category and the main categories related to it (sub-categories) according to the theoretical conceptions. They identify the characteristics of each category and the relationships between them on the horizontal and vertical axes. The researcher may also use the tree when considering categories. The tree can illustrate the relationships between categories and demonstrate the extent of density and complexity of the theoretical explanation.

The core category is the central theoretical category defining the informants' narratives. Within this theoretical core category, there may be several main categories, each representing a 'family' of sub-categories. As with the first-order theoretical analysis, as we move from the top to the bottom of the categories array (illustrated by a tree), the categories tend to be labeled in progressively more everyday terms. The categories located under the theoretical core category represent the characteristics of the narrative-based theory. These include sub-categories describing the conditions that influence the phenomenon, phenomenon-specific contexts and other intervening conditions. Also included are sub-categories that describe actions or interactions and outcomes that are connected to or result from the phenomenon. When the theoretical core category is changed, the researcher has to reorganize the sub-categories into a new order which emphasizes the characteristics of the new theoretical core category. If necessary, the researcher reexamines the data in its former analysis stages (former stages of categorization) in order to find new sub-categories (characteristics) for the subsequent building of a new narrative-based theory.

Types of second-order analysis

As mentioned above, second-order theoretical analysis is based on the three first stages of analysis and especially on the focused categorization. Commonly, the researchers utilize the second-order theoretical procedure when the focused categories already constructed are not meaningful or rich enough for direct translation into theoretical concepts. However, sometimes the researchers decide to conduct second-order theoretical analysis (even though they have already conducted a first-order theoretical categorization), because they seek to suggest another theoretical view of the data using the second-order procedure of analysis. We suggest two types of analysis in which the second-order procedure may be used for analyzing primary data. One type of analysis is the theoretical explanation of the relationships between two or more core categories of the same phenomenon. The second type of analysis focuses on finding theoretical patterns among the case narratives under inquiry.

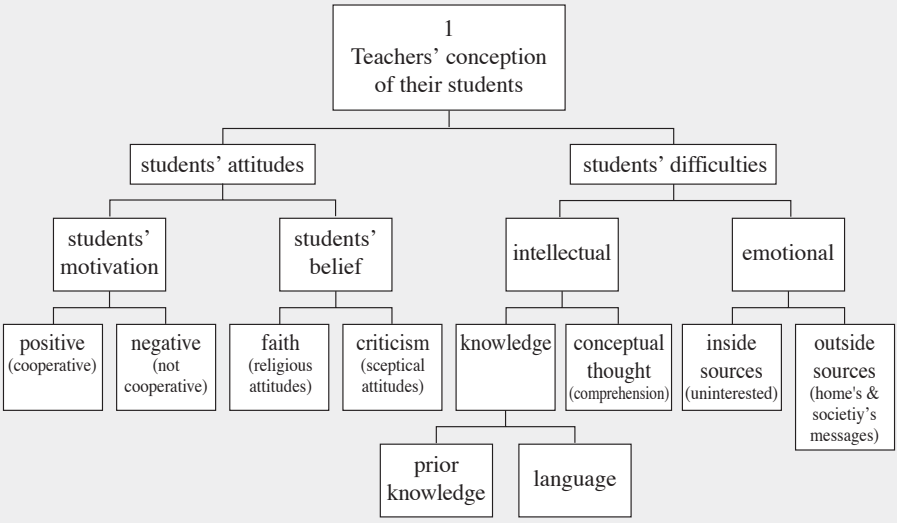
1. Focus on the relationships between core categories

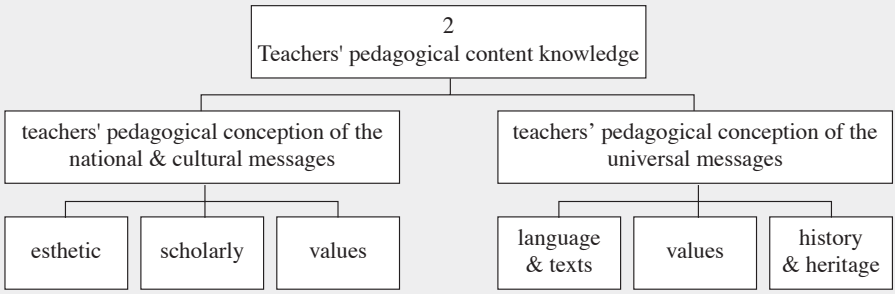
While in most cases the focused stage of analysis generates one central core category, sometimes this stage proffers two or more separate, parallel core categories. Each core category contains information that describes and explains part of the phenomenon under inquiry, and yields a separate story line. Incorporating the separate story lines together gives a more complete picture of the phenomenon. However, there may still be several aspects of the phenomenon which are not completely covered by the informants' narrative fragments. The information missing is pertinent to the question of relationships between the core categories. Sometimes, these issues cannot be clarified through first-order analysis. The following example (Box 11.1) will illustrate the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis.

Notes from the field / Box 11.1

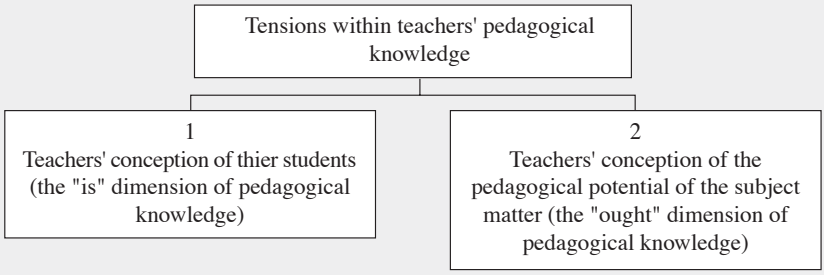
Relationships between core categories

The following is taken from the study which deals with the teachers' approaches toward teaching culturally valued texts. (Notes from several prior phases of this study have already been presented in previous chapters.)
The second-order analysis demonstrated here is based on the findings of the focused stage in the first-order analysis procedure. During the second-order theoretical process, the categories basically did not change; only some of their names were altered. Below are the two core focused categories:





Below are the second order theoretical core category and the two main theoretical sub-categories (which were originally the two core categories of the focused stage analysis)



These sub-categories were originally constructed as descriptive core categories in the focused stage. However, we noticed that the question of the relationships between these two core categories was not clarified through the first-order theoretical analysis (see Box 10.1, in chapter 10). In the second-order theoretical procedure we use the same descriptive core categories and change them to sub-categories under the 'umbrella' of a new core category that offers a theoretical explanation for the relationship between these two sub-categories. We could not conceive of this core category through a process of direct translation (typical of the procedure of first-order theoretical analysis), but a reasonable conversion process (typical of the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis) brought it to light.

This second-order explanation is based on the existing literature (Lampert, 1985; Berlak and Berlak, 1981). The analysis suggested that teachers' pedagogical knowledge usually involves tensions between its components that can be understood as a tension between what "ought to be" and what "is". Teachers' conceptions of their students is reflected by their "is" point of view, while their conceptions of the pedagogic potential of the subject matter is their "ought" point of view. Both views affect each other and constitute the teachers' pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986).

It is the researcher's theoretical explanation which is supported by the descriptive stories of the participants. This theoretical explanation was hinted at by some of the 52 informants, but none of them stated it explicitly (not even in everyday terms).

[taken from Shkedi (1997)]

As illustrated in Box 11.1, in second-order theoretical analysis, the researchers examine the separate descriptive core categories including their sub-sub-categories, in an attempt to understand the whole picture of the phenomenon under inquiry. They ask themselves: 'What kinds of relationships among the categories are evident?' Through this, the researchers try to fill in the conceptual-associational gap between the separate groups of categories. Technically, the researchers relate simultaneously to the focused core categories and to the main categories associated with each of them, reading their content carefully. The researchers identify the unique characteristics of each core category and its sub-categories as well as the relationships between them on the horizontal and the vertical axes. In accordance with the new theoretical considerations, they may make small changes, like replacing some of the names of the categories, at any level including sub-categories and sub-sub-categories and so on, (for example see above in Box 11.1, the descriptive core category 'teachers' pedagogical conception of the content' changes to 'teachers' conceptions of the pedagogical potential of the subject matter'). The researchers may also cut one category into segments or unite others. These minor changes are part of the process of refining the categories so that they may yield a new narrative-based theory. As in the illustration in Box 11.1, the researchers may use the focused analysis tree in this process. The tree can illustrate the relationships between categories and has the potential to disclose possible conceptual relationships between the core categories.

Sometimes the process of second-order theoretical analysis invokes ideas for a new construction of the focused analysis. This does not mean that the already existing analysis is incorrect or meaningless. As in the case of moving from the focused categories to the first-order theoretical categories, here too, the new analysis brings about a reconsideration of the preceding analytical stages. Through their effort to uncover the relationships between core categories, the researchers sometimes consider slightly different core categories and a new structure of main and sub-categories. These new core categories become the main elements of the second-order theoretical analysis and the backbone of the narrative-based theory.

2. Constructing patterns

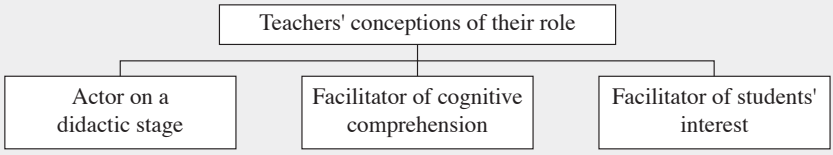
As illustrated in chapters 9-10, sometimes in narrative-based theory methodology the researcher may seek to establish that some groups of case narratives have characteristics in common, which may distinguish them from other groups of case narratives. While in the first-order categorization we construct our theoretical explanations on the basis of the existing categories (with minimal changes), sometimes the search for theoretical patterns brings the researcher to reconstruct these categories in the second-order analysis. In this way, the researchers reconstruct the focused categories in line with the appropriate theoretical literature. This is a

process characterized by a dialogue between the data and the conceptual perspective, with the conceptual perspective being the more dominant of the two. Box 11.2 is an example of constructing second-order theoretical patterns.

Notes from the field / Box 11.2

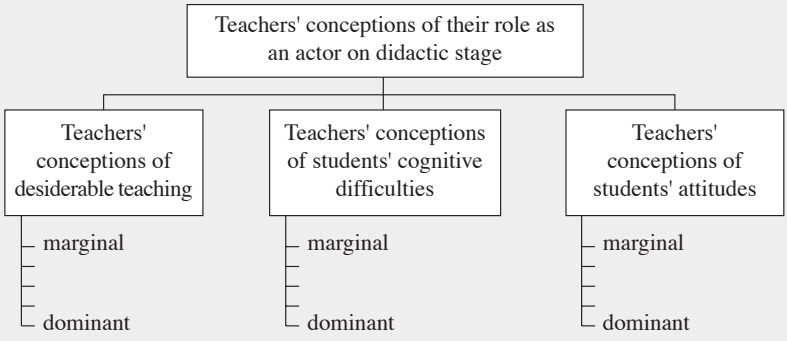
Constructing a theoretical pattern

The following notes are taken from the study which deals with teachers' conceptions of their role in teaching culturally valued texts.
The pattern of second-order theoretical analysis demonstrated here is based on the descriptive findings of the focused stage. The theoretical core category encompasses three main theoretical sub-categories, each representing a pattern of teachers' conceptions of their role, as demonstrated in the following 'tree':

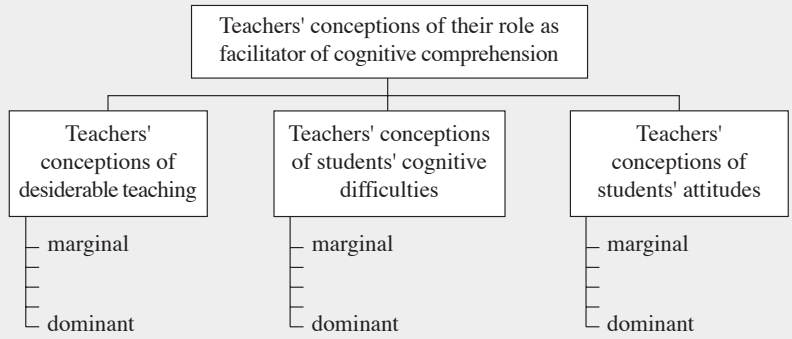


While most of the informants talked about their teaching role, none of them constructed it in ways used in this study, and certainly none of them used the theoretical terms suggested here. The following three patterns are a conversion of the informants' descriptions into the theoretical patterns constructed by the researchers through second-order analysis.

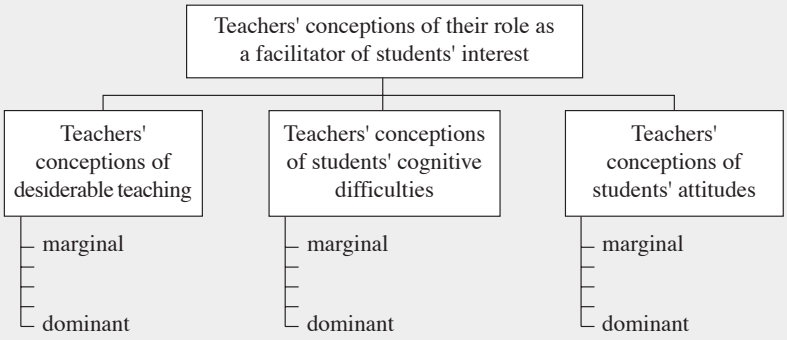
Pattern 1:



Pattern 2:



Pattern 3:



Using interviews and observations of 60 teachers, the three main patterns of the ways in which teachers perceive their roles are expressed in relation to several sub-categories, as demonstrated in the above 'trees'. Each main category has the same sub-categories. While each main category is divided into the same sub-categories, the differences in the patterns are expressed in the different weight of each of these sub-categories. For example, regarding the pattern of teachers' conception of their role as 'Actor on a didactic stage' the place of 'Teachers' conceptions of students' attitudes' and 'Teachers' conceptions of students' cognitive difficulties' are quite marginal in comparison to the pattern of 'Teachers' conceptions of desirable teaching' which is very dominant. [taken from Shkedi, 2001]

In order to construct second order theoretical patterns (like in the example of Box 11.2), the researcher may turn back to the mapping categorization (the product of the second stage of the analysis, see chapter 8) and check the analysis of every case narrative both separately and in comparison to the other case narratives. On

the basis of their theoretical idea, the researchers compare the case narratives to one another, and focus on categories that exist in all of the cases but might have some meaningful differences in their characteristics (in the example described in Box 11.2, there are three such categories). These categories become the main categories of the second-order theoretical analysis.

The second-order theoretical patterns are not revealed directly by the informants' narrative fragments . The researchers arrive at the theoretical patterns through a combination of the categories' dimensions. The researchers divide each category into sub-categories which represent the different characteristics of the same category (in the example described in Box 11.2, each category was divided into sub-categories according to the extent of dominance or marginality of each characteristic in the three patterns). These categories and sub-categories become the "building blocks" for the patterns. Each pattern contains a special and unique combination of the characteristics of the phenomenon under inquiry. The nature of each pattern is determined by those common characteristics which are specific to the particular group of case narratives and that distinguish them from other groups of cases (other patterns).

The role of the conceptual-theoretical perspective

All stages of Multiple Case Narrative analysis are a kind of ongoing 'dialogue' between the researchers' conceptual perspectives and the data gathered from the informants. Although the Multiple Case Narrative methodology is focused on understanding and presenting the informants' world, it is always underpinned by this 'dialogue' between external perspectives and local data. The starting point of analysis can be either the data gathered from the informants or the researchers' perspectives (which focus on and represent their analytical interests). While in the process of first-order analysis we talk about a balance between the two elements, in second-order theoretical analysis, as examplified above, the emphasis is more on the researchers' conceptual perspectives. The differences between the two processes are illustrated in figure 11.2:

Second-order categorization	First-order categorization
Conceptual <<<— > data Perspectives	conceptual < — > data perspectives

Figure 11.2: *The role of conceptual perspectives*

During the second-order theoretical analysis, the researcher makes use of the theoretical literature in order to construct a narrative-based theory. Our use of this literature now is quite similar to its usage in the theoretical stage of first-order analysis. We use concepts taken from this literature and seek explanations of our

phenomenon in light of the theoretical frameworks presented there. This literature can be used to stimulate theoretical consciousness by providing possible models for potential conceptual relationships between the existing theoretical categories. These theoretical explanations do not necessarily follow any existing grand theory. Nor is the purpose of such theoretical explanations to suggest any grand theory. As in the instance of first-order theoretical analysis, the purpose here is to propose a narrative-based theory based in and relating to the informants' narrative fragments. The researcher goes back and forth from the literature to the categories in search of a second-order theoretical explanation for the narratives being studied. Once the researchers establish a theoretical vision, they may try to find material corroborating, enlightening or even critical of it in the literature.

As in the natural sciences where a variety of models may be applied to the same object from different perspectives, so in the social sciences we can argue that human vision is binocular, and that seeing the same thing simultaneously from more than one perspective gives a fuller understanding and appreciation of its depth (Kirk and Miller, 1986). Thus, in the process of second-order theoretical analysis, it is most common to consult the theoretical literature for new alternative perspectives on the case narratives under examination.

Based on the emphases of the theoretical literature, one can argue that the process of second-order theoretical analysis is like the positivistic-quantitative research approach. Indeed, outsider observation on this process may not notice the uniqueness of this procedure. Nevertheless, we would insist that there is a meaningful difference between the assumptions on which this procedure is based and those of the positivistic-quantitative research approach. In an ordinary positivistic-quantitative study, we start our inquiry with a process of selecting a base theory on which all the research stages (research questions, data collection and analysis) are built. In contrast, in the procedure of a second-order theoretical analysis, like in other constructivist-qualitative varieties, we arrive at a possible theory only at the end of the research process, after we have collected the data and analyzed it according to constructivist-narrative principles through at least three stages of first-order analysis. This theory is found suitable in consequence of a continuous analysis process and it is suggested not as a general or universal theory but as grounded theory, specific to the particular case narratives under investigation. While the positivistic-quantitative approach is characterized by its deductive logic, the constructivist-narrative approach insists on inductive logic. Thus, the direction of the positivistic-quantitative approach is, more or less strictly, from stating a theory, deducing a hypotheses and testing the hypotheses. The direction of the Multiple Case Narrative during the first- or second-order analysis is mainly inductive, from data to categorization to descriptive narrative and to narrative-based theory.

First-order and second-order analysis

Some researchers seem to claim that the raw facts of a study (the data, and in our specific case, the informants' narrative fragments) are actually the first-order concepts, and that the second-order concepts are the notions used by the researcher to organize and explain the patterning of the first-order concepts. While the positivistic epistemology argues that it is possible to maintain an objective 'exteriorized' posture and to relate to the analyzed data as first-order concepts, the contructivist epistemology argues that it is impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). The individual and his or her world are co-dependent and the reality that we impute to the world is, in fact, a constructed one (Bruner, 1996) (this issue was expanded in chapter 1). Accordingly, in the constructivist-narrative research approach, we cannot talk about 'pure' first-order understandings. Every apparently 'raw fact' uncovered during the process of collecting data is already a product of many levels of interpretation. Indeed there are no 'pure' first-order concepts (Huberman and Miles, 1994). Accordingly, one could argue that in narrative research, what we mean by 'first-order analysis' is actually 'second-order analysis'. Nonetheless, here we will refer to our initial formal application of interpretation and analysis as 'first-order theoretical analysis' (i.e. interpretation that is linked directly to segments of the informants' narratives), in order to distinguish it from our subsequent secondary application of analysis and interpretation. These further steps of analysis are called 'second-order theoretical analysis', a process that is applied to and developed from the first-order analysis (Kuckartz, 1995).

Basically, the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis, like that of first-order theoretical analysis, is based on a minutely-detailed analysis conducted in a very explicit and transparent way. Testing is crucially important and an integral part of the second-order analysis process. We are constantly comparing hypotheses to 'reality' (the narrative fragments), making modifications, then testing again. Second-order theoretical analysis must always be traceable to the data that gave rise to them from the interactive context of data collection and analysis, in which the analyst is also a crucially significant factor (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; 1994; Lonkila, 1995). It enables the researchers to check themselves, particularly in regard to the connections they have made between the categories they have generated.

Maintaining transparency of the second-order theoretical procedure enhances the quality, validity and reliability of the research. However, in terms of reliability and validity, the case for second-order narrative-based theory is less strong (although equally well grounded) than that for the first-order analysis. Although the second-order theoretical analysis is recommended for research methods like the Multiple Case Narrative, there are also probably circumstances under which qualitative researchers who are immersed in the field for a relatively long time need or want

to present their analysis procedures and findings in a strict and transparent way. These researchers can also use the procedure of second-order theoretical analysis. By means of this procedure, they can assemble evidence for the validity and reliability of their research. (The issues of validity and reliability in constructivist-narrative research will be discussed in depth in chapter 13).

Conclusion

First-order theoretical analysis is an interpretation procedure that is linked directly to segments of the informants' narratives. Second-order analysis, in contrast, is an interpretation that has no direct connection with segments of primary data. The need for second-order theoretical analysis arises when the narratives we received directly from the informants, are not broad or strong enough to afford a solid narrative-based theory. The second-order categorization is based on at least three first stages of analysis. The direction of the second-order analysis is still mainly inductive, from data to categorization to descriptive narrative and on to narrative-based theory. In the theoretical stage of first-order categorization, the researcher translates the focused categorization into theoretical categorization, while in the process of second-order analysis, the researcher converts the focused categorization into second-order theoretical categorization. The function of theoretical literature becomes more dominant in this stage of analysis.

In this chapter we presented two types of analysis suggested in narrative-based theory research, in which second-order procedure may be used in analyzing primary data. One type of analysis is the theoretical explanation of the relationship between two or more core focused categories of the same phenomena. The second type of analysis focuses on finding theoretical patterns among the narrative cases under inquiry.

CHAPTER 12

THE MULTIPLE CASE NARRATIVE REPORT

There are several types of final reports used for the different varieties of qualitative research. Generally, these final reports can be divided into three types depending on the size of the population or site which was targeted for research. If the study is a bounded single case narrative focused on one person or one site, the single case narrative report is the most suitable form of reporting (Creswell, 1998). If the focus of the research is a cultural group, then a report in the form of an ethnographic description is more suitable (Merriam, 1985). If the extent of the research is several bounded cases focusing on several persons or sites, the collective case narrative report is the most appropriate format. This chapter suggests an additional type of final report given that our research focus is on multiple bounded case narratives: the Multiple Case Narrative report.

The components of the final report

Any qualiatative research report, and particularly the report of the Multiple Case Narrative, has a number of components.

An explication of the problem presents the occasion for the study. Conceptually, the research problem is defined in congruence with the review of literature. There should be a connection between the review of literature, the definition of the questions, and the research design and its conduct (Arksey and Knight, 1999). In constructivist-narrative research, the relationship between the literature review and other parts of the study is more dynamic and less linear than in positivistic-quantitative research. A clear literature review helps the readers to understand the researchers' conceptual perspective. At the end of the review of literature, the research questions which identify the phenomenon to be studied are stated, informing the readers of what specifically the researchers want to know about the subject under inquiry. (This issue was discussed in chapter 3). In order to present the connection between the review of literature and defining the research questions, the researchers may write a short theoretical background to the questions (or for each of the core questions). The theoretical assumptions should be formulated in concepts taken from the review of the literature. This procedure helps the researcher

(and, later, colleagues and readers) to locate the current research within a theoretical tradition (Jorgensen, 1989).

The methodological part should contain a thorough description of the methods and a detailed description of the procedures undertaken in order to ensure and demonstrate the trustworthiness of the study. "[…] methods and methodology must be explained and justified, but the most effective way to do this is to get into the habit of taking nothing for granted about, for example, the transparency to an audience of the logic of your methodological choices or analytical decisions and practices" (Mason, 1996, p. 150). (Chapter 13 is devoted to the issue of trustworthiness). While the report of the cases may be meant for the consumer of the inquiry, discussions of methodology are more typically directed at the researcher's peers and critics. Nonetheless, in all events, it is important that the methodology of the inquiry be communicated.

In single and collective case narrative, it is common to introduce each participant (case narrative) separately. In the Multiple Case Narrative, on the other hand, since there are many participants and it is impossible to introduce each one separately, we suggest that the participants be introduced together. In this section of the report, the researchers specify the main relevant characteristics of the informants. If the group of participants is divided in the study project into sub-groups, we recommend introducing each sub-group separately. In this section the researchers may use numerical descriptions, even including the use of percentages. In many respects, this section is quite similar to in the final report of traditional quantitative research. Nevertheless, during the elaboration of the findings, the researcher ought to impart the specific characteristics of each participant when presenting his/her opinion or quoting his/her words.

The section that focuses on the description of context and setting is essential to the Multiple Case Narrative report since the aim of the research is to understand the informants within their 'natural' contexts. This section includes a thorough description of the context of the informants' world and the setting within which the inquiry took place as well as the issues with which the inquiry was concerned.

The section which presents the findings is the case narrative report. This chapter is devoted to explaining the ways in which the research findings in the Multiple Case Narrative report are presented.

Like in any other type of research, the last part of the report is devoted to a discussion of outcomes and conclusions. The purpose of this section is actually to highlight the contribution of the research to the literature and the existing body of knowledge and to suggest directions for new research projects.

This list of research components is indeed common to most research reports, both in the positivistic-quantitative and the constructivist-qualitative approaches. Researchers have always been judged on the basis of the extent to which the report

communicates to the readers (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). However, in the positivistic-quantitative tradition, the structure of any specific study report seems quite standardized. The writing of any constructivist-qualitative study report is in many ways more demanding than the writing of a conventional technical report. In constructivist-qualitative research, including the Multiple Case Narrative, the researchers are more flexible in writing their reports. They can change the order and the emphases of the report components according to the messages they intend to communicate. In order to ensure a high degree of communication, it is recommended that after the writing of the final report is completely finished, the researchers subject it to a comprehensive check by colleagues and also to an external reader for comments. Only after this stage has been completed is the study ready for public release (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Arksey and Knight, 1999).

Chronologically, writing the final report is the last stage of the study. However, as mentioned, the Multiple Case Narrative methodology does not progress in a linear developmental way. The dynamic is not to finish one stage and to move on to the following one. Often the stages are combined. It is true that the final report follows the analysis and cannot come before it. However, sometimes when writing the report, the researchers 'discover' new areas for analysis. Basically, the process of writing a report is a process of creating and re-creating coherent research narratives. These narratives are reflections of the researchers' considerations but also may provide new insights for consideration. The researchers' orientation may change during the process of writing the final report; they may change the existing categories, create new ones, unite or divide categories, construct new families of categories, and so on. Consequently, composing the final report certainly provides the occasion for a re-visioning of the material and, perhaps, its re-analysis.

The narrative nature of the final report

As explained in chapter 1, Bruner (1985, 1996) suggests that there are two broad fundamental ways of knowing, thinking and expressing in which human beings organize and manage their perception of the world: the positivistic mode and the narrative mode. The positivistic mode, at its most developed, fulfills the ideal of a formal, mathematical system of description and explanation. Positivistic discourse develops toward pure expression of analytically and empirically verifiable propositions of the conventional type (Polkinghorne, 1995). Its language is regulated by the requirements of focus, consistency and non-contradiction. This is the accepted language of the quantitative-positivistic research tradition.

At the opposite extreme is the narrative mode of reporting. The imaginative application of the narrative mode leads to believable stories, convincing dramatic representations, and credible historical accounts. When people explain what they know, we often hear a story because that is how reality appears to them

(Gudmundsdottir, 1996). People express stories in different modes: verbal, written, or audio-visual (Gudmundsdottir, 1991). Stories are the end-product of a narrative way of knowing. "[…] reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world [… people's stories express] how they make sense of their world and the experience they have in the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The language which is accepted in the constructivist-qualitative research tradition – including the Multiple Case Narrative – is, by nature, narrative.

The ultimate purpose of any report is to improve the reader's level of understanding of whatever the report deals with (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Narrative reports serve this purpose best because they are epistemologically in harmony with the reader's experience (Stake, 1978). Due to its narrative character, the case narrative report provides an ideal vehicle for communicating with the reader. The case narrative report is an intensive holistic description and explanation of the phenomenon that was studied (Merriam, 1985). Multiple Case Narrative, as a research method for analyzing many case narratives, also yields a narrative description and explanation of the case narratives under examination. Eisner, (1979B, p. 10) identified the desirable report as one that "enables readers to emphathetically participate in the events that the writing describes. […] To be able to put yourself in the place of another is crucial for understanding how others feel."

Communication with audiences

A basic axiom holds that all writers write for an audience. Thus writers consciously think about the audiences of their studies (Arksey and Knight, 1999). There are at least four potential groups of audiences: those involved in the interviews and observations (the informants), colleagues, policymakers, and the general public (Creswell, 1998). Our aim is not simply to make our report accessible to our audiences in the sense of it being an 'easy read'; we also aim at engaging the attention and interest of the reader, and hence enhancing the human value and impact of our analysis. To succeed, the researcher has to 'make a connection' with his or her reader. A good report is like a guided tour in which we introduce our 'tourists' to a natural and/or human and cultural landscape through description and logical explanation in order to arrive at an understanding of them. We have to produce an account which is acceptable as well as accessible. What is acceptable will depend on the purpose of our account and the nature of the audience. A major step in producing an acceptable and accessible account is to address these requirements and to ensure that the style, structure and substance of our account meet them successfully (Dey, 1993).

It is important to find a way of translating our experience into a format that others can 'read'. To do this, we use words, even trying to say in words what

words cannot easily express. How is this done? Not by simply presenting the categories as they were analyzed but by constructing a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of what has been done, a description that relates to the phenomena but which gives them, in written form, the level of vitality and meaning that they possessed when they emerged. To achieve such an end, researchers must be able to use language artistically. Thus the task of researchers is to write in a way that will enable the reader to vicariously participate in the inquiry into the phenomena. However, the primary aim of the report is to present interpretation and, therefore, linguistic artistry must be skillfully executed so as to serve that aim. Achieving an optimal balance between the two is not a simple matter.

> Still another problem, and one of its most serious ones, is the tension that exists between using language to artistically describe and the fact that the use of such language often leads readers to conclude that the description is biased. (Eisner, 1985, p. 158)

The reader's attitudes toward and understanding of a set of facts, explanations and events usually depends on the quality of the report. The ability to be a storyteller should be regarded as the distinguishing characteristic of the narrative writer. (Gall et al., 1996). The writer may present a 'panoramic' or 'omniscient' point of view or a limited 'sharp focus' point of view whereby the writer focuses attention on one character and on that character's relation to the action. In other words, the researcher needs to enter directly into the mind of informants, experiencing the world through their central nervous system throughout a given scene, and understand and portray people as they understand themselves. (Denzin, 2000; Zeller 1995). "The intent is to build an emotional relationship joining the writer, the life told about, and the reader" (Denzin, 2000, p. 900).

The report is always only a composite picture of a limited part of the informants' reality, never the whole story. When we select information (the informants' fragmented narratives) for the purpose of the report, we select on some basis. However, implicitly and/or explicitly, we use the results of our own and others' judgments in interpreting, verifying and evaluating activities (Peshkin, 1993; Sciarra, 1999; Merrick, 1999).

> The stories we tell in our research reports and articles, are as much stories of how we interpret theory in terms of the data we have gathered as they are stories of and about our findings. (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p. 299)

Styles of writing report

The researchers of the Multiple Case Narrative 'tell a story' about the data and use a range of techniques - such as summarizing events, focusing on key episodes, delineating roles and characters, setting out chronological sequences – in order to

construct an illuminating narrative. There is no single method of narrative writing but rather a spectrum of approaches to texts that take narrative form. One preferred way is to write text which is a mixture of direct quotations (generally brief) from the interview, longer summaries of the content of speech, the writer's authorial voice, and interpretive commentary which knits the disparate elements together (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Like in other qualitative types, the Multiple Case Narrative report makes use of verbatim quotations. The use of the informants' own words is very consistent with the constructivist-narrative research approach, and gives an authentic picture of the phenomena under inquiry. "Verbatim quotations convey the fear, anger, frustration, exhilaration, and joy of a human being, and contain surface and deep embedded meanings about the person's life" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 115). Verbatim quotations are a good way to come to know the informants' experiences through their senses. The direct voice of the informants is preferred over the use of third-person reporting. However the researcher needs to choose the verbatim quotations very carefully, to make the necessary selections and reductions and not to impose on or bore the reader. Sometimes the researcher's third person descriptions will be more effective. In some circumstances researchers need to use their own words in order to make the transitions between several passages of the description. In all cases the researchers should let the reader know when they are using direct quotes and when they are interjecting their own words through the use of brackets or other conventional signs. When the researchers omit part of the quotation or skip some words or sentences, it important to point this out by the conventional sign of " […] " (Seidman, 1991).

In writing a Multiple Case Narrative report, we do not discriminate between primary and secondary data. Although the discussion above refers specifically to primary data, the principles of the report based on both types of data are the same. In the Multiple Case Narrative report, the researchers combine descriptions and theoretical explanations using both types of data according to their research purpose as illustrated in Box 13.1.

Notes from the research field / Box 12.1

Report using primary and secondary data

The following is a portion of a report of a teacher-training practicum. In these practicum activities, the student-teachers teach pupils during three long days of seminars. The aim of the activity was for the school pupils to understand the changes that have taken place in the Jewish world in the modern era.

Ari hung a placard on the board that showed an image of a Jew wearing clothing typical of Jews in the 19th century. Against the backdrop of this image, Ari explained the aim of the activity to the class: "We're trying to understand how the life-style of Jews changed

— what stayed and what got thrown out, so to speak, when they came to Israel and became pioneers. Does anyone have any ideas?..."
The children looked at the board and suggested that some of the clothing should be removed.
One pupil said, "The hat". The pupils took off the hat.
Another pupil said, "All those black clothes, hardly anyone wears them anymore".
Step by step they "undressed" the image removing all its clothes and unique effects.
After the children had removed the clothing, they re-dressed the image as the "new Jew" — the "pioneer." The activity finished when one of the pupils took a work tool and gave it to the image, "This is a work tool instead of a prayer."
Ari explains:

> [The seminar] is concerned with the continuum of Jewish life choices; a continuum at the extremities of which are traditional Jewish religious approaches and secular society.

[taken from Shkedi, 2000]

Denzin (2000) emphasizes that "as qualitative researchers engage experimental writing forms, a parallel movement is occurring in journalism, and there is much to be learned from these development" (p. 899) Zeller, (1995) argued for similarities between the 'new journalism' and qualitative research. In his view, the writing strategies and techniques employed by the 'new journalists' are appropriate models for case narrative reporters. He designated four writing devices which serve the new journalists when portraying real events and real people that can be borrowed by qualitative research: [1] scene-by-scene construction, the telling of a story in scenic episodes; [2] character development through full recording of dialogue; [3] the use of the third-person subjective point of view: experiencing an event through the perspective of one of its participants; and [4] full detailing of the "status life" or rank of participants in a scene: their everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, styles of furniture, clothing and other actual or symbolic details that might exist within a scene.

The use of visual representations

A clearly different descriptive style encompasses the use of visual representation (Fetterman, 1989). Multiple Case Narrative reports are enriched when represented in 'graphic displays' that allow the reader to see, in condensed form, the full data set, in order literally to see what is there. Sometimes text can be a tedious and tiresome way of transmitting information which could be encapsulated better in a few diagramatic lines and boxes (Dey, 1993). Visual representations are especially useful when we have to think through – and portray - such complexities as the relationships between categories and the ways in which processes permeate the

data. Visual representations can also help with making comparisons between categories or in identifying gaps in the data. By trying to construct visuals tools, we force ourselves to clarify the main points and how these interrelate. But a word of caution: constructing a visual representation can tempt us to impose an order on the data, perhaps for the sake of simplicity and clarity, which is neither accurate nor adequate.

There are at least three types of visual tools we might use: matrices, flow-charts and photographs. A matrix is a rectangular array of data in rows and columns. It provides a simple, systematic, graphic way to compare and contrast data. With it the reader can compare and cross-reference categories of information (Gall et al. 1996). Flow charts provide us with a multi-dimensional space in which to think about our data. Because this space is multi-dimensional, information can be summarized within it which would otherwise be dispersed across a long sequence of statements (Merriam, 1998). Photographs can sometimes be a useful vehicle for presenting information. Photographs may correspond more closely to how we actually perceive, and can perform the task of transferring information quite succinctly (Dey, 1993).

Types of report

In 'classic' case narrative research there are two basic types of reports. The first is the single case narrative, which focuses on one particular case narrative. The second type, which is more complicated, is the collective or multiple case narrative version of this classic single case narrative representation. This type of report will contain many narratives, "usually presented as separate chapters or sections, about each of the cases singly. In addition to these individual case narratives, the report also will contain a chapter or section covering the cross-case analysis and results" (Yin, 1984, p. 128).

These two formats of narrative reports are not suited to the Multiple Case Narrative. This type of research includes many case narratives and one cannot review each case narrative separately without boring the reader to tears. Furthermore, the purpose of the Multiple Case Narrative is not to present each case narrative separately, but to bring to light similar or distinct characteristics that have become apparent from the comparisons between the many case narratives. Thus commonly in Multiple Case Narrative reports, there may be no separate chapters or sections devoted to the individual case naratives. (In a research project which combines the Multiple Case Narrative with in-depth research of several case narratives, the final report may include a review of individual case narratives.) Generally in the Multiple Case Narrative report, each chapter or section is devoted to a separate cross-case issue. This format follows a series of questions and answers based on the main questions of the research.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest three approaches to writing a report that are instructive for researchers and readers of qualitative research: the journalistic, the descriptive and the conceptual. These three approaches can be thought of as positioned along a continuum ranging from a report including a low level of interpretation and abstraction, to reports incorporating the high level of interpretation and abstraction required for theory building.

The first approach, which they compare to the work of a journalist, is taken by the researcher who intends to present the research participants' narratives almost without analysis. This type of description may emerged from the categories constructed in the mapping stage of analysis (Chapter 8). The goal of such description is to let the research participants speak for themselves as much as possible and to allow them to tell their stories without interpretation. This type of description uses the direct language of the informants almost exclusively, with minimum language intervention by the researchers. A collection of personal journal entries or autobiographical stories, organized for coherent reading but with no systematic apparent analysis, would be examples of such an approach. This type of report is not appropriate for professional academic research and it does not, of course, include any type of theoretical explanation. Nonetheless, sometimes the researchers seek to present some aspects of their findings to non-professional audiences and will find this type of reporting to be the most appropriate.

The focused-narrative report presents the story line which emerged during the focused stage of analysis (see chapter 9). This approach to reporting is taken by the researcher who is primarily concerned with constructing a narrative which describes accurately what she or he has understood. The focused-narrative report closely resembles what Geertz (1973) called the 'thick description'. This approach presents some selection and interpretation of the data (the narrative fragments), and the skilled researcher using this approach becomes adept at weaving descriptions, observations, quotations, and their own interpretations into a rich and credible coherent narrative (Mishler, 1986). This kind of report gives a central place to the language of the informants based on their culture. This kind of report can be regarded as interpretive-descriptive. The two primary characteristics of interpretive-descriptive reporting are the use of literary devices to bring the case narratives alive for the reader and the strong presence of the researcher's voice in the report (Gall et al., 1996).

The narrative-based theory report is focused on the theoretical story line which emerged in the theoretical analysis stage (chapter 10). While this kind of report gives an important place to the language of the informants and their culture, it focuses on the theoretical conceptualization of the informants' narratives and includes theoretical terms used in the academic community. Researchers who seek to present narrative-based theory use this type of report. It requires the highest

level of interpretation and abstraction from the data in order to arrive at the organizing concepts and tenets of a theory which explains the phenomenon of interest (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

What are the differences between the focused-narrative report and the narrative-based theory report? The narrative-based theory report uses concepts which emerge from the critical literature and academic tradition. Similar data that appeared in the focused-narrative report are accompanied by theoretical labels in the narrative-based theory report. In the focused-narrative report, there is less attempt to emphasize our interpretation of data, and the focus is on presenting the data from the perspectives of the informants. In the focused-narrative report, data may be organized chronologically or thematically.

There is an additional type of report which is less prevalent in the Multiple Case Narrative: the theoretical-analytical report. This type of report makes almost no use of native language and informants' narratives and instead uses mainly theoretical language. The participants, their lives and their views are characterized in grand generalizations. This type of report is less suited to the constructivist-narrative approach and it is not recommended for use in the Multiple Case Narrative report. It is nonetheless used at times when researchers need to present their studies in short reports or as a short conclusion about their research.

There is clear connection between the stage of analysis and the type of report the research can sustain. During the process of data analysis in the Multiple Case Narrative, we can produce any one of these types of reports. If the researchers seek to achieve a journalistic report, they can limit their analysis to the mapping analysis stage (but obviously they can also write such a report if they continue to higher levels of analysis). If their goal is a focused-narrative report they can be content with the focused level of analysis. But if they want to achieve a narrative-based theory they need to reach a higher level of analysis: the theoretical analysis, either the first-order or second-order theoretical analysis.

Types of Multiple Case Narrative reports

The following review will deal with the three types of reports that are most common in narrative-based theory research: a focused-narrative report, the first-order narrative-based theory report and the second-order narrative-based theory report.

a. The focused-narrative report

The purpose of the focused-narrative report is to take the reader inside the phenomenon that was studied. The presentation of the data must be richly descriptive, sufficiently so as to enable the reader to feel and understand the contours of the phenomenon. The writer becomes the eyes, ears and other perceptual senses

of the reader. The focused-narrative report does not include judgments about whether or not what occurred was good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, or any other interpretive or moral judgment (Patton, 1980). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest three major characteristics of the descriptive case report mode: 1) It is ideal for conveying a 'thick description'; 2) It provides the reader with an internal consistency; 3) It provides a grounded assessment of context.

In contrast to a 'thin' description which merely states 'facts', Geertz (1973) suggests that a 'thick' description includes information about the context of an act, the intentions and meanings that organize the action, and its subsequent evolution. "Thick description is a written record of cultural interpretation. […] A thin description would simply describe a rapid closing of the eyelid. A thick description gives context, telling the reader whether the movement was a blink caused by a piece of dust in someone's eye or a romantic signal transmitted across a crowded room" (Fetterman, 1989, p. 114). This kind of reporting requires detailed descriptions of the social setting within which the informants are living and the context of their actions; the time frame within which their action takes place; the spatial context; the network of social relationships; and so on. The relevant social contexts may be a group, organization, institution, culture or society.

Contexts are important as a means of situating action and of grasping its wider social and historical import. In any focused-narrative report, the researchers must include descriptions of the cultural context in which the case narratives take place (Merriam, 1998). In a more literal way, contexts can also be seen as a key to meaning, since meaning can be conveyed 'correctly' only if the context is also understood. In generating the focused-narrative report, the researcher needs to attend to the contextual features that give specific meanings to the informants' words so that their contributions to the whole story can be understood. One way is through vivid and convincing descriptions of the setting. This provides the authentic context within which the whole story can be understood (Polkinghorne, 1995; Dey, 1993).

In the Multiple Case Narrative it is sometimes recommended to borrow some quantitative research methods in constructing the final research report. In the Multiple Case Narrative report we need to describe many case narratives and we may use quantitative methods for this purpose. Sometimes the researchers may find that short quantitative descriptions are more focused and clearer than a long narrative description. We can even use simple statistical analytical tools for parts of our narrative descriptions. However, even in cases in which the narrative researcher uses numerical descriptions or percentages, the narrative nature of the research report should be preserved. While the data is coded in numbers, the actual verbal responses should be preserved and, sometimes, presented. Thus, while some quantitative procedures help in depicting the stories that emerged

in the study, the qualitative dimensions help both to depict and to explain these phenomena.

In general there are two types of focused-narrative report: sequential-focused-narrative and category-focused-narrative report. The sequential-focused-narrative report is written in more of a story style, while the category-focused-narrative report usually takes more formal-structured form. The sequential-focused-narrative report is more common in many varieties of narrative research. Generally, it focuses on the story of one case narrative, but at times it also tells the stories of several case narratives. In the Multiple Case Narrative, sequential-focused description is less common, perhaps because it is not an ideal way to present findings on a large number of case narratives. However, in many Multiple Case Narrative studies, the researchers may extract several case narratives and introduce them not simply as part of a group of case narratives but as separate and unique cases. This is the case when the researcher wants to emphasize some special characteristics or patterns of the phenomenon under inquiry.

1. The sequential-focused-narrative report:

The main characteristic of the sequential-focused-narrative report is its inclusive narrative nature. This type of report is presented in stories. Narration is the kind of discourse that addresses the question 'What happened?' Narratives have been identified by many qualitative researchers as a mode of communication more resonant with human experience than traditional social science research rhetoric and, thus, inherently more understandable (Zeller, 1995; McQuillan, 2000).

For the narrative researcher, the story provides the perfect vehicle for solving reporting problems. The power of a storied outcome lies in its presentation of a distinctive individual in a unique situation, dealing with issues in a personal manner. Researchers should provide a story line or plot that will serve to configure or compose the disparate data elements into a meaningful explanation. A first step in configuring the data into a story is to arrange the data elements chronologically or according to other elements of the story line. The next step is to identify which categories are most important in the construction of the story. The focused analysis of the primary and secondary data provides the researcher with such information. The sequential-focused- narrative report is based on the focused analysis data and on the principles of good story building.

Story-telling is an art form, usually with three basic components: a setting, characters and a plot. All of these components are likely to figure in any account produced through qualitative analysis. The appropriate construction of the story brings the action and sometimes the dialogue of the characters before the reader with a fullness comparable to what a witness might observe or overhear if he had been present. The story engages our attention by allowing us to know the characters

and thus making us care what happens to them. Each story has its plot. The plot provides the systemic unity to the story. The story is a unit of events that has a beginning, a middle, and an end (Zeller, 1995). The components of the sequential-focused-narrative report are an integrated whole and cannot be easily separated from one another, as is illustrated in figure 12.1:

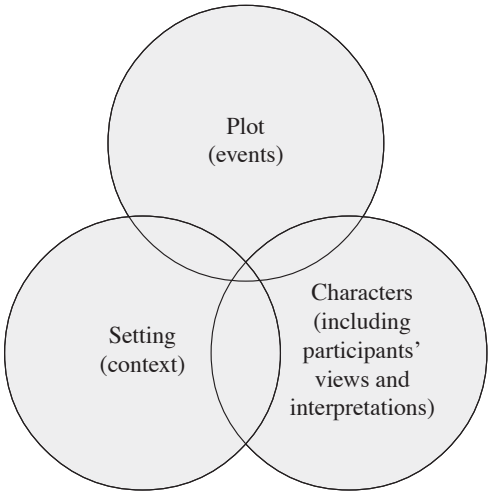


Figure 12.1: *The components of the sequential-focused-narrative report*

In general there are two main story structures: diachronic and synchronic:

In regard to temporality, it is possible to classify qualitative data into two kinds - diachronic and synchronic. Diachronic data contain temporal information about the sequential relationship of events. The data describe when events occurred and the effect the events had on subsequent happenings. […] Synchronic data lack the historical and development dimension. They are framed as categorical answers to questions put by an interviewer (Mishler, 1986) and provide information about the present situation or belief of an informant […]. (Polkinghorne 1995, p. 12)

The synchronically descriptive story is usually constructed differently from the diachronically descriptive story, which is organized within a time framework. In a diachronically descriptive story the researcher may wish to tell a time-bounded story, ensuring that the reader understand the exact sequence of events leading up to an incident (Zeller, 1995). In a synchronically descriptive story, the researchers do not emphasize the real time sequences and prefer to place the stress on other characteristics that seem more important in constructing the story line.

Notes from the research field / Box 12.2

The sequential-focused-narrative report

The following example of a sequential-focused-narrative report is part of a research project which evaluated a teacher education program for teachers coming from all over the world to a one year program in Israel. The focus of this project was on observation of classroom practice and a process of reflection following the observations. The description presented below focuses on the experience of one participant of the program.

Jerry, aged 38, was the principal of a Jewish school in the United States belonging to the Reform movement, which included 1100 children from kindergarten to the tenth grade. Jerry had received academic teacher training and had a public-school teaching certificate. He also had an MA in Jewish Studies.

During his staying in Israel, Jerry developed his program of activities for the year: "I hope to develop a step-by-step, grade-by-grade approach for the teaching of God and Jewish values... The project will include the development and adaptation of specific materials to be used." Jerry intended to use his peer observations to further this goal by visiting and observing schools in Israel: "It is my hope to discover creative and effective methods of teaching these subjects."

Despite his expectations, Jerry was doubtful whether he would find what he was looking for in Israel. He had already acquired a slight acquaintance with Israeli schools when he brought his daughter to school: "I'm not impressed with the education in Israel... In my opinion it is not particularly progressive. Why should it be progressive just in Jewish studies?"

Jerry's first visits were to a school that was supposed to have views similar to those of the Reform stream to which he belonged. His first observation took place in the third grade in a lesson on the topic of prayer. The lesson began with group prayer including all the children, and continued with the study of two particular prayers. At first Jerry was very impressed by the lesson, but his enthusiasm waned when he heard the teacher insist that the children bring only special Jewish food (Kosher) to school. This degree of religious strictness was not acceptable in the religious worldview held by Jerry and the school he headed. "In the Reform Movement in the United States, this is of no importance. No one even thinks about it."

The setting of Jerry's second observation was a Bible class in the second grade of the same school. The topic of the lesson was the story of the flood in Genesis. The teacher's approach seemed too fundamentalistic to Jerry. He claimed that the teacher taught the story exactly as it was written in the Bible, without adding or subtracting anything. Jerry was aghast: "The children could think that God acted exactly as it's written in the story. Do we want them to believe that?" After the class he spoke to the school advisor. He tried to find out from her what the school's religious philosophy was. He did not like the advisor's answers, and he commented, "In the United States this would not be encouraged in a school of the Reform Movement."

Jerry summed up his peer observations with a certain sense of disappointment: "It wasn't

bad. It wasn't a waste of time. But it also wasn't very helpful, because I couldn't find things that were similar to the way things are in my own school, and I can't transfer anything from here directly to my own setting." On a 10-point scale, Jerry rated his satisfaction of the peer observations between 3 and 4: "This means that I gained something, but I would also have gotten something without it."

[taken from Shkedi and Wigatow-Caminetsky 1997]

2. The category-focused-narrative report:

While the sequential-focused-narrative report presents the data mainly as a story with a plot or some other apparent story line, a category-focused-narrative report displays the data thematically, according to the logic of its categories. These identifications are made through categorization in the process of analysis, and thus the categories become the building blocks of the description (Merriam, 1998). The category-focused-narrative style can be used either for single case narrative representations or for collective or cross-case narrative representations. However, it is most useful for studies dealing with many case narratives, and thus is especially appropriate for the report of the focused analysis stage of the Multiple Case Narrative.

In this type of report, there may be no separate chapters or sections devoted to individual case narratives (unless it is used for a single case narrative representation). The data of several case narratives is presented according to chosen categories, following the focused analysis order. In such a narrative report, each chapter or section is devoted to a separate cross-case issue, a single category or a family of categories. These chapters, sections, subtopics, and other components of a narrative report should be organized according to the logic of analysis findings or the logic of the message the researchers want to deliver. The challenge of the researcher is to present the findings in a clear and accessible narrative report. Thus, the researcher can order and re-order the categories presented in the description in order to achieve good communication with the readers. Despite the fact that the main structure of this description style is not story-like, the researcher should borrow relevant features from the language of story-telling to make a connection with the readers.

Technically, the process of writing the category-focused-narrative report can be easier than writing the sequential-focused-narrative report. The researchers can use the word processing document that contains the categories as a basis for writing the description (For an example of documenting the data according to categories see chapter 8, Box 8.2). The researchers may arrange the categories in any order they prefer according to the way they want them to be described. This long document is like a skeleton. The researcher needs to embellish it into a vital narrative report and give it the appropriate spirit. During the process of writing the narrative report,

the researchers make selections, give emphasis to some issues, choose the verbatim quotations they want to include, and convert others into their own words. The final product of the process is a narrative report focusing on main issues with several sub-issues within it. The components of the category descriptions and their integration in the report is illustrated in figure 12.2:

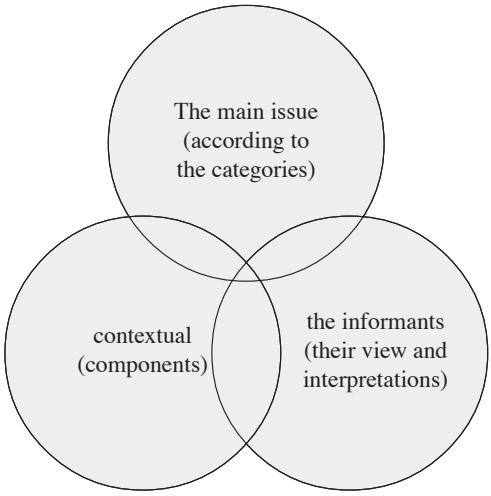


Figure 12.2: *The components of the category-focused-narrative report*

Notes from the research field / Box 12.3
The category-focused-narrative report

The following is a portion of category-focused-narrative report that is part of a study dealing with teachers' attitudes toward educational research. The following is a description of one category (which was ordered as category No. 5) with its sub-categories.

5. What constitutes research according to the teachers?
During the course of the interviews, the teachers mentioned several characteristics of research. These are not fixed definitions, but rather ideas raised in one context or another. Nevertheless, a very specific picture emerges.

5A. Quantitative-objective tools
Some teachers emphasized the precise characteristics of research and of tools of measurement. Other teachers emphasized the objective characteristics of research

Research is research, tables, statistics, numbers... (Andrea)

Research must be objective...if it's done by people in the field...it's a problem, it's not objective (Shlomit)

5B. Theory guides the hypotheses of the research
Some teachers emphasized the fact that research rests on theories and hypotheses. As such, teachers included some additional characteristics, such as efforts to reach conclusions, use of research tools to examine hypotheses, and so on. The mocking tone was not lost in these comments:

I look at the problem and give it the form of a question or assumption... I give the assumption, or question, an answer based on articles I've read books on the subject, and then I draw out the answer I want in the population or in the reality that I chose to research. (Monica)

5C. The research population is as wide and representative as possible
Several teachers related to the breadth of the population in question and the method of choosing it.

I see research as checking a problem of many people and not some one-time case where the results apply to this case, or direction or solutions...(Yael)

5D. The ability to generalize
Several teachers emphasized that research tries to learn from one specific phenomenon about parallel phenomena in different contexts.

[The researchers] reached conclusions from this population, about, let's say, a similar population somewhere else... (Bruria)

5E. Alternative paradigms of research
Only three teachers described an entirely different kind of research. Two of them mentioned research that can be understood as "action research" which, according to them, is connected to the teacher's work and is very significant.

Trial and error...I check and then I draw conclusions... It's not exactly scientific research... It's field research where you deal with basically your work... From experience you can get to a theory, conclusions. (Shoshi)

One teacher pointed out another type of research, philosophical research.

...you read all the material that's been written about a particular subject and reach conclusions about it... (Katy)

[taken from Shkedi, 1998]

The category-focused-narrative and the sequential-focused-narrative are two different styles of report. Both are based on the focused stage of analysis but the logic of their internal construction is very different. Each descriptive style has its advantages as well as limitations. Sometimes, in narrative research, we make use of the two report types in the same study (Gall et al. 1996). For instance, we use the sequential-focused-narrative form to present several sample single case narratives, while the rest of the case narratives are described using the category-

focused-narrative form. In this way we enrich our reports with the advantages of both report styles.

b. The narrative-based theory report

The narrative-based theory report is a description that presents theoretical explanations as well as proper focused coherent narratives of the informants under inquiry. It is the product of the theoretical analysis (see chapter 9). The most troublesome issue in writing a narrative-based theory report is determining the right combination of descriptions and theoretical conceptions and the proper balance between them (Merriam, 1985; 1998). Some feel that such a report should be largely descriptive with additional sections of analytical arguments. Others call for reports that are heavily analytical that include a description in the story style. However, the overall style of sequential-focused narrative report, like a story, may be less suited to a theoretical description. The category-focused-narrative style seems more appropriate. Nevertheless, we can use some elements of story-telling to improve our presentation and we can certainly borrow some features from the language of story-telling in order to make a connection with the readers.

The chapters, sections, sub-topics, and other components of the theoretical description should be organized in a linear-analytic structure according to the logic of the theoretical network. The sequence of sub-topics is drawn from the narrative-based theory which arose during the theoretical analysis. In other words, the order of the sub-topics follows the arrangement of the theoretical analysis tree.

The process of constructing the narrative-based theory report is similar to the construction of the category-focused-narrative report. However, rather than using the data of the focused categorization as the basis for writing the description, we use the data of the theoretical categorization. During the process of writing the narrative-based theory report, the researchers once again check the logic of the theoretical categories and make essential modifications. They make selections, give emphasis to some sub-categories over others, choose the verbatim quotations they want to preserve, and convert others into their own language integrated, perhaps, with academic-theoretical language. The final product of such a process is a narrative-based theory report focusing on the core theoretical category with several sub-issues which give the appropriate explanation. Like in the case of the category focused- narrative report, the researchers can use the word processing document that contains the categories and their contents as a basis for writing the report.

One of the main differences between the focused-narrative report (both sequential and category) and the narrative-based theory report concerns the use of theoretical academic language. Ordinarily both the sequential- and the category-focused-narrative report limit themselves to the use of the informants' language

with a minimum (if any) addition of conceptual academic terms. The narrative-based theory report is a document using the informants' language side-by-side with conceptual-theoretical language. The narrative-based theory report is by nature a theoretical explanation of the phenomena or, in other words, it is the translation of the informants' narratives into theoretical academic language within a conceptual framework. Such a report includes many theoretical terms, bibliographic references, and quotations from the relevant academic literature. The integration of the components of the theoretical description, including the theoretical terms, is illustrated in figure 12.3:

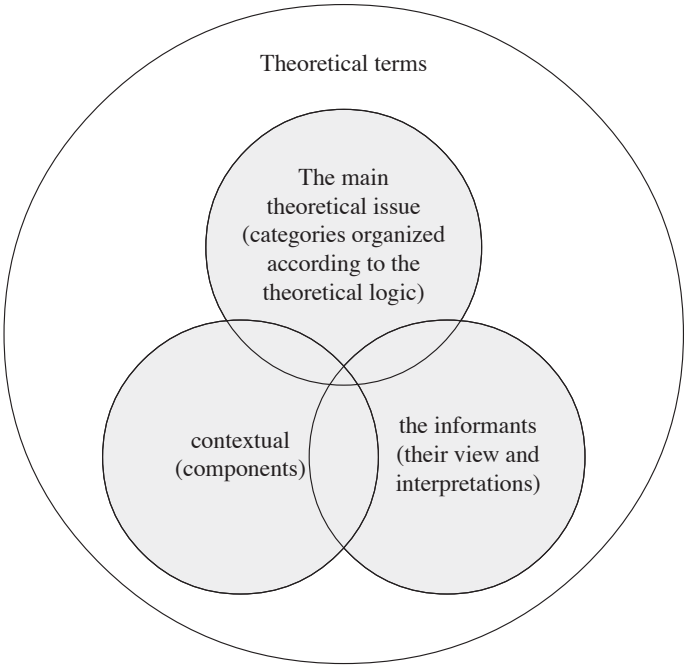


Figure 12.3: *The components of narrative-based theory report*

As illustrated in figure 12.3, the components of the theoretical description and their integration with each other are quite similar to those of the focused-narrative report with one significant difference: the use of theoretical terms in all aspects of the report.

Notes from the field of research / Box 12.4

The narrative-based theory report

The following example of a narrative-based theory report is taken from research that compares between teachers' and students' perceptions of learning Bible. There were 52 participants in the study. The following portions deal with students' perceptions.

Students' perceptions of Bible and learning Bible

An analysis of the students' interviews reveals four orientations.

1. **Normative-Theological Orientation.**
   This orientation assumes that the Biblical text presents ideas of truth which originate from divine commands. This perception sees God as the sole source of ideas and places ultimate value on the acceptance of the ideas even before understanding them (Rosenak, 1987). Nine students related to the Bible in a Normative-Theological manner; the same number granted Normative-Theological significance to God as the valued source of the Bible.

   ... It is a divine thing, and a normal man, or even a genius, is not equipped to write it. It is also one of the most important things in Judaism; it is a book that will sustain the Jewish people... (Roni, 17, religious)

2. **Sociological Orientation**
   The Sociological orientation entails a feeling of belonging to the Jewish people to whom the Bible relates, but without great interest in the Jewish content of the Bible (Schweid, 1995). Thirty respondents expressed a Sociological orientation towards the Bible. Only ten with a Sociological orientation saw God as the valued source of the Bible.

   Characteristic of the Sociological orientation is the use of expressive phrases like: "Very important", "I love", "I respect", "It pleases me", "It's special", "It is connected to me", and the like. But not to be misled - the Sociological orientation is not an all-encompassing, a priori acceptance of the truth of these texts, and certainly not of their authority.

   ... very holy, very important... it is the only remnant left to us from the past... I respect it very much, I will never throw the Bible onto the floor. The things that are written are very nice... everything is connected to you... but I don't know, it seems to me very unrealistic... it's a bit hard to believe in all that... (Malcha, 18, traditional).

3. **Developmental orientation**
   The respondents who related to the Bible in a Developmental manner related to it as a central Jewish source, but used academic-scientific methods to find meaning in it. While Jewish tradition relates to the texts in an a-historical and a-scientific manner, the Developmental approach seeks to subject these texts to criticism like any other product of human creation (Schofield, 1989). The Developmental orientation views happenings within our world from the point of view of people's desires, deeds, talents, and control over the occurrence of events. Nine respondents related to the

Bible in a manner that can be defined as Developmental whereas fourteen related in this way to the idea that God is the valued source of the Bible.

It's stories that are supposed to explain certain phenomena, that are supposed to provide background for the development of the Jewish people. I believe more in science ... in the theory of evolution, how man was created, how the world was created. I mean this gives answers more than the Bible which contains many contradictions. (Lior, 18, secular)

4. **Distancing Orientation**
Distancing implies alienation and detachment from the Bible. Four informants out of the 52 expressed orientations towards the Bible that can be defined as distancing.

This is a Jewish text ... the way the page appears, in the phrasing, in the shape of the letters. It is unattractive. I wouldn't want to touch a text like this ... The explanation following is ridiculous. The way it is written is really stupid... It connects directly to Judaism and to everything related to it - the hypocrasy ... The whole idea that everything has to do with God is bogus... (Efrat, 17, secular)

[taken from Shkedi, 2001]

Normally the narrative-based theory reports are category-based descriptions. However, it is possible to write a narrative-based theory report which focuses on a story line or plot that serves to configure or compose the disparate data elements into a meaningful narrative and explanation. The researchers use the theoretical terms in order to introduce the interpretive aspects of this narrative.

C. The integrated-narrative report

As we have already mentioned, it is possible to compose reports of several single case narratives together with the cross-case findings in the same narrative-based theory report. Commonly, the narrative-based theory report presents the findings of its case narratives detached from their contexts. In the analysis process, the researchers indeed relate to the context of each case, but in reading the report, the reader may sometimes lose the whole picture. As we have explained in this chapter, there is no way to present each case narrative and its context separately. The whole picture of each case narrative and its context, which are sometimes very important to understanding the research findings, are indeed lost. Nevertheless, the researchers try to preserve part of the contextual picture by including general common and comparative descriptions of informants, and also by including authentic pieces of narrative from many of the cases.

There is one more option that could be used to solve this problem of reporting the research findings within their contexts: the integrated-narrative report. Researchers can choose some case narratives and present them more exclusively,

not necessarily as whole cases but in a way that emphasizes some common contextual characteristics, as examples for understanding the other case narratives. There are several versions of this type of report. The researchers can choose one case narrative or even several cases for emphasizing some questions, problems or issues raised in the research in general. In this way, each presentation-discussion of an issue is accompanied by a case narrative portrait. In pattern-based composing, the researchers can present a sample case narrative for each theoretical pattern which highlights the uniqueness of the pattern with its context. Another option that is most advantageous when the case narratives all belong to a similar context (like social workers in their field work, physicians in a hospital, and so on), is the use of a sample case narrative or cases for representing the context of all the cases. When there are several kinds of environmental contexts, the researchers could use several sample case narratives for each kind. A sample case narrative would be one that has the potential to represent the characteristics of its class of cases.

Conclusion

The Multiple Case Narrative report has several components: presentation of the research problem, review of methodology, description of the study population, description of context or setting, presentation of the findings, and discussion of outcomes and conclusions. However, the researchers are quite flexible in writing their reports. They can change the order and the emphases of the report components according to the messages they intend to communicate. The ultimate purpose of the report is to improve the reader's level of understanding of whatever the report deals with. Thus the task of the researchers is to write in a way that will enable the reader to vicariously participate in the informants' narratives. The report writer becomes the eyes, ears and perceptual senses of the reader.

The Multiple Case Narrative researcher seeks to bring to light similar or distinct characteristics that have become apparent from the comparisons between the many case narratives. There are two main ways of presenting the case narratives under examination: the focused-narrative and the narrative-based theory report. While the focused-narrative report focuses mainly on the informants' descriptions and uses the informants' language, the narrative-based theory report uses the informants' language side-by-side with theoretical language.

It is also possible to compose reports of several single case narratives together with the cross-case findings of the same research project. This is the integrated-narrative report. The researcher can choose some case narratives and present them more extensively in a way that emphasizes some common contextual characteristics as an exemplar for understanding the other case narratives.

CHAPTER 13

STANDARD OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

Conceptions of trustworthiness

The positivist-quantitative research approach has defined 'objective' and 'subjective' as they relate to its arena of research. In this scheme of things, objective has come to mean true, factual, and real, and this "objectivity is obtained in two ways. First, experience is reported in such a way that is accessible to others […]. Second, the results of the experiment are reported in terms of theoretically meaningful variables, measured in ways that are themselves justifiable in terms of the relevant theories" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 13-14). "By default, subjective has come to mean partially-true, tentative, and less-than-real" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 20). These interpretations of 'objective' and 'subjective', although mainly (if not exclusively) appropriate for the natural science, have entered the popular lexicon as general measures of trustworthiness.

In the Multiple Case Narrative methodology, that follows the constructivist-narrative approach, the notions of objectivity and subjectivity have quite different values.

> […] One might take another look at the word objective and develop a different sense of the word. […] An object is other; to be objective is to make something into other. To be objective is to be cold and distant. Within this framework, subjective also takes on a different meaning: to be subjective is to be aware of the agency, that is, of action. From the phenomenological point of view, subjective is synonymous with agency or with the actor's perspective. To be subjective, therefore, is to 'tend to' the subject. (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 20)

Truth, according to the constructivist-narrative approach, is necessarily subjective. If the researcher does not clarify his/her perception, and if the reader of a study report does not establish a truth relationship with the report, then any use of the finding is unlikely (Ryan, 1987). Truth, in this context, means to speak not of underlying scientific attributes, objective observable, and universal forces, but of perceptions and understandings that come from immersion in and a holistic perspective on the phenomena at hand.

> The ordinary sense of constructivism is also called perspectivism in contemporary epistemology.

> It is the view that all knowledge claims and their evaluation take place within a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained. Perspectivism opposes a naive realist and empiricist epistemology that holds that there can be some kind of unmediated, direct grasp of the empirical world and that knowledge (i.e. the mind) simply reflects or mirrors what is "out there". (Schwandt, 2000, p. 197)

The aim of narrative research is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon under examination. Our search for meaning has a dual focus. "[…] as the qualitative researcher knows very well, words carry meanings, even meanings that are not intended. Therefore, [as we also insisted earlier in this book] we have chosen to use the word perspectival instead of subjective to refer to the way qualitative researchers see the world. Perspectival has the added advantage of being inclusive of differing perspectives, including but not limited to the researchers' perspective" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 20).

Lincoln and Guba, (1985) suggested the concept of trustworthiness in designing and executing qualitative research and in evaluating the work of other qualitative researchers. "Readers want to know that research has been carefully done, so that findings can be trusted" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 49). "The question of trustworthiness essentially asks: To what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? Do we believe what the researcher has reported?" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 145). The positivist-quantitative research approach does not recognize the concept of 'trustworthiness' as a criterion for truth in research. Its assumption, by contrast, is "not only that there is an external world, but that the external world itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken of it, independent of the process or circumstances of viewing" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 14).

Since narrative research does not aim at uncovering some grand scientific 'truth' but, rather, at exploring the question of meaning-in-context, much attention needs to be paid to a clear rationale and methods of interpretation. "Although one might argue that some precise methods are more suited than others for conducting research on human construction of social realities, no one would argue that a single method – or collection of methods – is the royal road to ultimate knowledge" (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, p. 178). "Trustworthiness, then, has to do with how one approaches, collects, analyzes, interprets, and reports data. A primary emphasis is placed on making the steps and influences conscious to the researcher and visible to readers" (Merrick, 1999, p. 31). The researcher should attend to the methodological questions and clarify them in detail in the methodological explanation of the research report.

> All research must respond to canons that stand as criteria against which the trustworthiness of the project can be evaluated […]: [1] How truthful are the particular findings of the study? By

> what criteria can we judge them? [2] How applicable are these findings to another setting or group of people? [3] How can we be reasonably sure that the findings would be replicated if the study were conducted with the same participants in the same context? [4] How can we be sure that the findings are reflective of the subjects and the inquiry itself rather than the product of the researcher's biases or prejudices? (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 144-145)

Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Like many other qualitative researchers, Lincoln and Guba disagree with the epistemological assumptions underlying the conventional terms and argue for a new vocabulary and rhetoric with which to discuss the issue of trustworthiness. They propose that the conventional formulation used by positivistic-quantitative researchers be replaced with four new terms that fit the constructivist-narrative epistemology better: 'Credibility' in place of internal validity; 'transferability' in place of external validity or generalization; 'dependability' in place of reliability; and 'confirmability' in place of objectivity. In a later article, Guba and Lincoln (1998) propose the use of the notion of 'authenticity'. This notion of 'authenticity' involves criteria of fairness, enlarging personal constructions, improved understanding of the constructions of others, stimulating to action, and empowering action.

Most of the new terms and perspectives suggested by Lincoln and Guba and many other qualitative researchers, are very useful for testing qualitative research assumptions. However, in this book, we prefer the use of the conventional terms: validity, reliability and generalization (external validity). We prefer the use of such terms first and foremost for communication with those who are not in the field of constructivist-qualitative research. The use of alternative terms sounds to many "outsiders" expressive of less value. We do not suggest the adoption of the positivistic-quantitative presumptions but, like Kirk and Miller (1986) suggest utilizing conventional terms and filling them with meanings suited to a new constructivist-narrative approach.

While we adopt the three conventional terms, validity, reliability and generalization as a measure of trustworthiness, the fourth conventional notion of research verification, objectivity, is in contradiction with the constructivist-narrative research assumptions and thus cannot be adopted by researchers using the constructivist-narrative approach. As we insisted above, we suggest adopting the notion of 'perspective' which is consistent with the constructivist-narrative presumptions. Perspective is the point of departure for research verification and is the basis for the measuring of validity, reliability and generalization. Generalization, validity and reliability in the Multiple Case Narrative, as in other narrative varieties, are meaningful only in reference to a perspective.

Validity in the Multiple Case Narrative

The meaning of validity

A standard physical example of validity can be demonstrated by the use of a metric ruler to measure the width of an entrance door to a house. If our measurement with the ruler is valid, it will tell us the correct width and anyone using the same type of measure will arrive at the same conclusion. But what will happen when somebody uses another kind of measuring instrument, for instance a ruler in inches, and he/she arrives at a different measurement? And what will happen if somebody decides to use his/her own idiosyncratic form of measurement that is not recognized by anybody else. Will the measurement still be valid? The answer is probably yes as long as the terms of the measuring instrument are made explicit from the start (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

What is the status of the measurement if the person decides not to use numbers but, rather to use a verbal description? How do we relate to a phrase like 'This is the narrowest entrance door that I have ever seen' or 'This entrance door does not conform to the official standard'? Is the measurement still valid? In the constructivist-narrative research approach, this kind of measurement could indeed be valid. The person who used these descriptions did not measure in numbers or use any other conventional means of measuring; rather he/she used personal or professional criteria as the basis for his/her measurements. According to the presumptions of constructivist-narrative research there are plenty of perspectives on which to base measurement and none is correct and/or preferable a-priori. The question of the validity of the research does not rest on whether X or Y criterion is legitimate or not, but rather on an honest disclosure of the perspective of the persons who made the measurements (Merrick, 1999). This disclosure enables both the researchers and the readers to determine the validity of the measurement. In the case of constructivist- narrative research, the issue of validity is "a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees" (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 21). A valid account is one which can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically (Dey, 1993). In the Multiple Case Narrative and other constructivist-narrative research strategies, we decide on the criterion for measurement during the research process, and this can be altered, adapted or changed during the course of the analysis process. In a narrative research project it is always possible to analyze the same phenomenon in radically different ways depending on the values and interests of the researchers, and the research findings would be valid in all cases if they are based on the researchers' explicit pespective (Riesman, 1993).

Kirk and Miller (1986) suggested using the notions of apparent validity, instrumental validity and theoretical validity in addressing the problem of validity:

> The distinction between apparent and instrumental validity can be illustrated by imaging a Graduate Record Examination on which those students who do well in graduate school get all the questions wrong, whereas those who do poorly in graduate school answer many of them correctly . For the instrumental purpose of selecting graduate students, such an exam might be excellent, but since it would have no apparent validity, it would doubtless be illegal. (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 22).

The criteria of apparent and instrumental validity could be applied both to the positivistic-quantitative and to the constructivist-narrative research approaches. The instrumental validity of constructivist-narrative research is determined by the proper use of its research methods, and the apparent validity of constructivist-narrative reserch is determined by the sensiblity of its findings. Accordingly, the researchers of a constructivist-narrative study should take care that their research processes and products not only be technically sound but also have deep plausibility. When, for instance, the research process has been conducted with honesty and care but the results sound implausible, the researchers should re-check their research process.

> Theoretical validity underlies discussions of both apparent and instrumental validity. If the perverse examination of which good students differentially give the wrong answers were backed by a theoretical reason why it worked, its use could be justified without resorting to apparent validity. (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 23)

Positivist researchers may claim validity for their studies when their research process and findings are not backed by the criterion of apparent validity but, rather, have a theoretical basis. The constructivist-narrative researchers can also use the theoretical criterion to look into validation. However, the criterion of theoretical validity is applied in constructivist-narrative research in a different way from its application in positivistic-quantitative research. In the constructivist-narrative approach the theoretical perspective is developed along with the research process, constructed and reconstructed until the final report is written, and is not an a-priori statement. Thus, in a narrative research project when the theoretical and apparent criteria are not consistent with one another, the researcher should recheck his/her research processes. In many cases it will be necessary to change their theoretical-conceptual perspective.

Insuring validity

Asking the wrong question is actually the source of most validity errors. Typically, the narrative researcher arrives on the scene with considerable theoretical baggage and conceptual consciousness, but with very little idea of what will happen next. Using theory, common sense, and any other resources at hand, the researcher

attempts to collect data sometimes on the basis of an inappropriate conceptual assumption. Many times, the researchers do not notice their mistakes, which continue to influence the process of gathering data, formal analysis and, even, the research conclusions. We suggest that the researchers' consciousness of their conceptual perspectives (see discussion in chapter 6) may serve as a bulwark against such research mistakes.

> We have no other technology for making this kind of validity check than long-run personal interaction. We can never be absolutely sure that we understand all the idiosyncratic cultural implications of anything, but the sensitive, intelligent fieldworker armed with good theoretical orientation and good rapport over a long period of time is the best check we can make. (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p. 32)

Validation means moving back and forth between induction and deduction, between experience and reflection on experience, between data and our conceptual perspective, between our perspectives and our conclusions. What is discovered "must be verified by going back to the empirical world under study and examining the extent to which the emergent analysis fits the phenomenon and works to explain what has been observed" (Patton, 1980, p. 47). As Rizzo et al. (1992) argued, in qualitative research "the sole objective of every procedure is to improve the accuracy of interpretation (i.e. internal validity)" (p. 111).

In the Multiple Case Narrative, like in other narrative research types, the researcher must preserve a chain of evidence as each analytic step is conducted. This means that the researchers must keep all the transcribed documentations of interviews, observations, and other information documentation (Huberman and Miles, 1994). They must also preserve all documents, memos, analysis trees and other diagrams from the analysis process. The chain of evidence consists of the portions of particular pieces of explicit data, as one shifts from data collection to analysis and to overall findings and conclusions (Yin, 1981). The use of a procedure containing detailed stages of analysis helps to protect the researcher from any misleading voices and, to some extent, forces the researcher's own voice to be questioning, questioned, and provisional. Preserving the documents of each analysis stage enables the researchers to locate more easily their mistaken points of departure (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

> Validity of method and interpretation therefore must be demonstrated through a careful retracing and reconstruction of the route by which you think you reached them, and there are no easy answers or shortcuts in this process. (Mason, 1996, p. 152)

Preserving the chain of evidence enables the researchers to consult with peers or colleagues by providing information that will make it possible for others to

confirm (or question) the trustworthiness of the research. It can be an informal process or a more structured procedure (Merriam, 1985; 1998; Merrick, 1999). The process of consultation can be done by [a] describing how the interpretations were produced, [b] making visible what we have done, and [c] making the data available to other researchers (Riessman, 1993).

> Qualitative researchers have to question seriously the internal validity of their work if other researchers reading their field notes feel the evidence does not support the way in which they have depicted the situation. (Schofield 1989, p. 203)

Another mode of checking validity is by writing the final report as a 'thick descriptive' report, either as a focused description (focused-narrative report) or a theoretical description (narrative-based theory report). Such a thick description should be rich and include context information, proper quotations from informants, and an explicit conceptual discussion. This will allow us to examine the persuasiveness of the argument or conclusions of the research. "Persuasiveness is greatest when the theoretical claims are supported with evidence from the informants' accounts" (Riessman, 1993, p. 65). This allows us to assess whether the interpretation is reasonable and convincing, and whether it is really coherent. A proper description has the potential to enable the researchers once again to check themselves, to enable collegues to react critically, and then later, to convince (or not) the readers of the final report that the research process and its conclusions are indeed valid.

Another procedure for enabling validation is the use of triangulation. "Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 6). This means that a variety of the data sources are used to enhance the validity of the findings (Merriam, 1985; 1998; Morgan, 1988; Stake, 2000).

> Triangulation is basic in ethnographic research. It is at the heart of ethnographic validity, testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypothesis. Typically, the ethnographer compares information sources to test the quality of the information (and the person sharing it), to understand more completely the part an actor plays in the social drama, and ultimately to put the whole situation in perspective. (Fetterman, 1989, p. 89)

In the Multiple Case Narrative, the use of triangulation is relatively minimal. While some other varieties of qualitative research, particularly ethnography, use many different kinds of resources in their continual immersion in the field, in the Multiple Case Narrative the researchers generally limit themselves to interviews, with the option of using observations and documents as additional sources of data.

Reliability in the Multiple Case Narrative

The nature of reliability

Reliability, in its traditional sense, means that the operations of a study can be repeated and will yield the same result. If our research is reliable, then others using the same procedures should be able to produce the same result (Yin, 1984). Reliability, in other words, is the extent to which a research procedure yields the same answers however and whenever it is carried out. In order to demonstrate reliability, we come back to the use of our metric ruler to measure the width of an entrance door to a house. If our measurement with the ruler is accurate, the measurement, of course, will be consistent every time the procedure is carried out. The ruler will show us the same measure each time. But when someone uses for instance a ruler in inches, and he/she gains another measurement, is our measurement still reliable? The answer is absolutely no. In order to achieve reliability, the repetition of the procedure by the researcher him/herself or by any other agent should be conducted using the same criterion of measurement.

It is generally not expected in constructivist-narrative research that other researchers in similar or even the same situation can replicate exactly the findings of any research project (Schofield 1989; Merrick, 1999). What will happen when the researchers doing narrative research use unique conceptual and/or theoretical criteria which may even have been constructed during the analysis process itself? What is the status of this 'measurement' in light of the narrative claim that every phenomenon studied is unique and cannot be replicated in a different context and at another time? What determines the basis for the claim to reliability of constructivist-narrative analysis is the explicit presentation of the perspective and criteria of the persons who made the measurements. "The requirement is that the researcher shows how the research has been done and decisions have been made, so that the reader could conduct an 'audit trail', examining the good sense and plausibility of the researcher's thought and actions" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 54) This explicit presentation enables the researcher, colleagues and outside readers to examine the reliability of the measurement in its unique context and perspective. "In order to convince others, you must provide some sort of account of exactly how you achieved the degree of reliability and accuracy you claim to be providing" (Mason, 1996, p. 146). In order to emphasize the uniqueness of the nature of reliability in constructivist research, Lincoln and Guba, (1985) suggested the concept 'dependability' as a substitute term for reliability in constructivist research.

Ensuring reliability

The nature of constructivist-narrative research, which focuses on the researcher as the preferred research tool, poses a challenge to claims for reliability. If part of the research process (if not most of it) is founded on the personal perspective of

the researcher, how can they check their own reliability? The procedure of the Multiple Case Narrative, as suggested in this book, addresses this challenge through its demand for formal and overt stages of collecting data and its analysis. This is achieved on the basis of three conditions:

1. Creating a data base: The main issue here is that every research project should strive to develop a formal retrievable data base, so that the researchers and his or her collegues can come back and recheck the sources. In principle other investigators can also review the data base evidence directly, and need not be limited to the written reports.
2. Preserving the analysis documents: The analysis procedure suggested in the Multiple Case Narrative contains up to four stages depending on the research goal (see chapters 6-11). The documents of any stage which contain its categories and their content should be preserved so that the researchers can come back and reconstruct the analysis process and check the reliability of the research. This enables them to expose their analysis process to the examination of their colleagues and to get feedback on its constructivist-narrative reliability. Documenting the analytical process is crucial because it serves not only as a trace to what has been done, but also a prompt for further analysis (Pidegton, 1996).
3. Maintaining a chain of evidence in the final report: The report should contain sufficient citations from the informants on the relevant issues. The report must also indicate the circumstances under which the information was collected, and show that the data collection actually followed the study questions logically. Thus a reading of the report can indicate the links between the study process and the study questions. The purpose of this is to allow the reader to follow the derivation of any evidence from the research questions to the ultimate case study conclusions.

In carrying out these conditions, it is important that the researchers be able to switch back and forth between the insiders' perspective and an analytic framework. Consultations with colleagues may facilitate this. It is imperative that the researchers describe carefully and very specifically which methods of investigation were used to produce specific results. A team of researchers or the use of trained assistants may be extremely valuable and even necessary if a high degree of reliability is to be obtained (Jorgensen, 1989).

By presenting the empirical support for our categories, our readers can judge for themselves the strength of our evidence. If we cannot expect others to replicate our findings, the best we can do is to explain how we arrived at our results. This gives our audience the chance to scrutinize our procedures and to decide whether, at least in principle, the results ought to be reliable (Dey, 1993; Peshkin, 2000).

Generalization in the Multiple Case Narrative

The challenge of generalization

The acceptance of constructivist-narrative research as a valid and potentially rich approach begs the question of whether narrative research findings can usefully be generalized to a similar site and population. One of the more frequent criticisms of qualitative research, even among its advocates, is that it appears hard to generalize qualitative findings to people and setting other than those studies. Some researchers assume that one cannot generalize from qualitative findings and see this as a limitation of the method (Firestone, 1993; Merriam 1985). As already argued in this book, the Multiple Case Narrative claims to meet this challenge, at least partly.

The heart of generalization (external validity) is replicability. The positivistic-quantitative tradition emphasizes the critical importance of the replicability of results. The questions most commonly asked on this issue are: Would the results be reproducible in those target instances to which one intends to generalize - the population, situation, time, treatment form or format, measures, study designs and procedures? No matter what one's philosophical stance on the importance of generalizability is, it is clear that the numerous characteristics that typify the constructivist-narrative approach are not consistent with achieving generalization as it has usually been conceptualized by the positivistic-quantitative tradition (Schofield, 1989).

> […] one typical criticism made of qualitative investigations by quantitative researchers is wrong because application of their quantitative-research norms is inappropriate here. Their criticism is that qualitative data collection yields data that is noncomparable, because not all subjects are asked exactly the same interview questions. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 191)

In answer to such a challenge, Stake (1995) argues that:

> The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (Stake, 1995, p. 8)

Stake suggests studying the uniqueness as a way for achieving generalization. At first sight this seems to be self-contradictory, yet this is the paradox of the single case narrative. By studying the uniqueness of the particular, we come to understand the universal (Simons, 1996). Stake (1978) clarified the contribution of uniqueness to our understanding of the general in qualitative research in the following way:

> Naturalistic generalizations […] derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places

> with which this person is familiar. […] These generalizations may become verbalized, passing of course from tacit knowledge to propositional; but they have not yet passed the empirical and logical tests that characterize formal (scholarly, scientific) generalizations. [...] Good generalization aid the understanding of general conditions, but good generalizations can lead one to see phenomena more simplistically than one should. (Stake, 1978, pp. 6-7)

Stake (1995) talks about 'naturalistic generalization' rather than formalistic generalization and proposed that the qualitative researcher could organize the study to maximize the opportunity for naturalistic generalization. Guba and Lincoln (1989) reject the utility of the idea of generalization altogether and argue that it be abandoned as a goal of inquiry and replaced by the term 'transferability'. Other terms that are already in use for generalization are: 'comparability,' 'apparency' and 'verisimilitude' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Scofield, 1989). As mentioned above, for the purpose of communication with researchers and readers who are not completely familiar with constructivist-narrative research, in the Multiple Case Narrative we suggest to follow Stake (1995; 1978) and prefer the term 'generalization' over all other alternatives.

The nature of generalization

Accepting the path to generalization suggested by Stake (1978; 1995) may lead to the conclusion that the consumer (reader) of the research, not the author, does the generalizing. It is up to the consumer to decide what aspects of the case narrative apply in new contexts. The burden of proof for narrative generalization lies less with the investigator him/herself rather than with the reader (Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Peshkin 1993; Firestone 1993). This leads us to relate to research findings not as "well-established conclusions, but rather what might better be described as empirically developed hypotheses" (Merriam and Simpson, 1984, p. 96).

> […] the reader must judge whether the findings we report for the individuals whom we have studied should be considered applicable to any other group of individuals regarding whom our reader might be interested. […] We can now see that those who perform case studies are confronted with a problem of generalizability that is not different in kind from that confronted by their quantitative colleagues. […] In much the same way that the reader of a quantitative study must build his […] bridge to evaluate whether the results of that study are relevant to certain other situations, so the critical reader of a case study must examine whether an inferential bridge can be built between this case and other cases of interest to the reader. (Shulman, 1981, p. 9)

While the reader is the one who decides if he/she can find a basis for generalization and actually transfer the findings of one case narrative to another, the researcher has an obligation to support this process by providing a rich, detailed,

thick description of the case narrative report. Presenting a thick description may "enable the readers to empathetically participate in the events that the writer describes. To be able to put yourself in the place of another is crucial for understanding how the other feels" (Eisner, 1979B, p. 10). We cannot know the situations to which readers are likely to consider applying our study findings. "Readers also make inferences about the significance of a research report for situations and groups that are of interest to them. It is not possible to prevent readers from generalizing, since that sort of thinking is embedded in the act of reading itself. It is, though, desirable to draw their attention to the generalizations that you regard as secure and – or – significant" (Arksey and Knight, 1999, p. 58). Therefore we must include in the report a broad range of background features, descriptions of the processes studied as well as their outcomes so that readers have enough information to assess the match between the situation under examination and their own, especially since their situations might be quite different (Firestone, 1993).

The obligation of the researchers to provide a rich, detailed, thick description brings Shulman (1981) to claim that the potential for generalization makes the difference between case study (or in the term we frequently use in this book, 'case narrative') and other simple descriptions:

> To claim that one is conducting a case study requires that an answer be provided to the question, "what is this a case of?" Not every description is a case study. It may be a description of a singular individual or event. To claim that something is a case study is to assert that it is a member of a family of individuals or events of which it is in some sense representative. (Shulman, 1981, p. 9)

Three arguments for generalization

Firestone (1993) argues for three types of generalization from the particular to the general in qualitative studies: [a] case-to-case generalization (translation); [b] analytic generalization or extrapolation using a theory; and [c] generalization (extrapolation) from sample to population.

A. Case-to-case generalization

> While [other arguments for generalization] have a relatively long history in social sciences, case-to-case transfer comes out of recent efforts to use qualitative methods for program evaluation. […] Case-to-case transfer occurs whenever a person in one setting considers adopting a program or idea from another one. (Firestone, 1993, p. 17)

The concept of case-to-case generalization calls for an adaptation of the meaning of generalizability to focus on the degree to which the situation studied matches other situations in which one is interested. This conception of generalization provides a more realistic and workable way of thinking about the generalizability

of constructivist-narrative research results than do more classical approaches. “A consensus appears to be emerging that for qualitative researchers generalizability is best thought of as a matter of the ‘fit’ between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study” (Schofield, 1989, p. 226) This mode of generalization is closer to Stake’s (1978; 1995) conception of ‘naturalistic generalization’ that focuses on applying the findings from one study to another similar situation in order to enhance our understanding of that other situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) hold that case-to-case generalization is the only defensible format for the generalization of constructivist research findings.

Case-to-case generalization calls for a dialogue between the analysis of a particular event and a more universal audience. This process “enables us not to predict but to ‘anticipate’ (Geertz, 1973) what might be involved in analogous situations”; It helps us to “understand how things might connect and interact” (Nobit and Hare, 1988, p. 18). The provision of rich thick descriptions would enable and facilitate such a dialogue. Thus thick descriptions are crucial, since without them one does not have the information necessary for an informed judgment about the issue of fit and case-to-case generalization (Firestone, 1993).

None of the arguments for case-to-case generalization can be easily applied. What is found in some particular context has meaning generally only in the idiographic sense for that case narrative, that context at that time. The findings of a particular study cannot be applied in other contexts simply because they are held to be ‘generalizable’. “At best the investigator can supply only the information about the case studied that may make possible a judgment of transferability type of generalization to some other case by the future readers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 217).

Case-to-case generalization is nonetheless possible in all types of narrative research whose final products are thick descriptions: single case narrative, collective case narrative and multiple case narrative. However, it is most appropriate in those studies that are based on a presentation of a rich contextual background, like single and even collective case narratives, so that their thick descriptions are more grounded. The situation is a little more problematic in the Multiple Case Narrative because in this method, generally most (if not all) of its single case narratives are not represented in the final report as distinct entities. (For an intensive discussion on the final report, see chapter 12).

Narrative reports, by their nature, are generally in harmony with the reader’s world and thus have the potential to communicate with the reader (Stake, 1978). Those who read narratives, whether single, collective or multiple case narratives, may find some elements of the case narratives - and not necessarily the case narratives as a whole – applicable to their own situations. Case-to-case

generalization does not necessarily mean that we seek after the transferability of the case narrative as a whole to other situations. It is possible to pinpoint even a few elements of the case narrative(s) which might have the potential to shed light on other situations. This kind of case-to-case generalization is, perhaps, more like a process of inspiration than one of logical deductions about compatibility. In this sense, this option of case-to-case generalization makes the final report of the Multiple Case Narrative, which focuses on conceptual and case detail description, appropriate for case-to-case generalization.

B. Analytic Generalization

By linking the specific research questions to larger theoretical constructs, the writer shows that the particulars of this study serve to illuminate larger issues and are, therefore, of general significance (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). According to Yin (1984, p. 39), "in analytic generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to a broader theory". In Firestone's terms, "to generalize to a theory is to provide evidence that supports (but does not definitively prove) that theory" (Firestone, 1993, p. 17). In the Multiple Case Narrative and other constructivist-qualitative types of research, to generalize to a theory is not connected with making predictions, and does not even necessarily use the whole theory as a frame of reference. The theories that emerge in Multiple Case Narrative research are more of the grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) than the grand theory type.

To conduct analytic generalization, the researcher can refer to the conceptual-theoretical framework to show how concepts and models guided the data collection and analysis.

> By doing so, the researcher states the theoretical parameters of the research. Then those who make policy or design research studies within those same parameters can determine whether or not the cases described can be generalized for new research policy and transferred to other settings, while the reader or user of specific research can see how research ties into a body of theory. (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p. 146)

Researchers using the Multiple Case Narrative methodology who seek analytic generalization will translate their analysis descriptive categories into theoretical terms. (This procedure has been explained in chapter 10). The process of theoretical analysis itself becomes the basis for analytic generalization. Generalization in this sense refers to the process of developing theoretical concepts and connections. Thus, specifying the relevance of the study to multiple theories facilitates analytic generalization. As opposed to the principles of case-to-case generalization, that is based more on applying indices from one situation to another, analytic

generalization is based more on inferrence than on simple application. Narrative analysis often provides a better basis for inferring generalizations than for applying them (Dey, 1993).

C. Generalization to population

The quest for achieving some extent of generalization from sample to a larger population is one of the major reasons for using the Multiple Case Narrative methodology. The Multiple Case Narrative pulls together information on a wide variety of cases, deconstructs these cases into 'categories' and then examines the associations between the categories using narrative displays or theoretical arguments. This has been called the 'associational' approach (as opposed to the previous 'application' and 'inference' approaches).

> For the purpose of generalization, the strength of the associational approach is that by including moderate to large numbers of cases and emphasizing broad cross-site patterns, the researcher can protect against the idiosyncrasy that may appear in single-case studies. (Firestone, 1993, p. 20)

If the researcher can demonstrate that some characteristics of the cases studied are similar to other cases, then generalizations are more secure. Treating the case narratives as a cluster of characteristics (categories) strengthens the potential of the study for case to population generalization (McClintock, et al., 1983). Accordingly, the Multiple Case Narrative is a promising methodology for bridging the nomothetic-idiographic research gap. It can overcome the problems of generalizing from a single case narrative and at the same time provides a more in-depth analysis of complex phenomena than can the traditional quantitative research (Larsson, 1993).

Efforts to strengthen the sample-to-population generalizability of the Multiple Case Narrative confront some difficulties. Looking for similarities between the case narratives has some utility (Arksey and Knight, 1999), but, in general, even in the Multiple Case Narrative the samples are not big, and questions remain as to how they were selected (Firestone, 1993). This means that any generalization depends on definite conditions, and the similarities between the case narratives studied and the larger population should be qualified in relation to these conditions (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

The validity of generalization to population can be strengthened as the number of case narratives is increased. This kind of case-to-population generalization is never examined in positivistic-quantitative notions. As we insisted earlier, the presumption of the constructivist-narrative approach is that the reader ultimately decides whether the results of one study have meaning in relation to another contexts. This is true in regards to the two first types of generalization, and it is also true of case-to-population generalization.

Conclusion

The notion of 'trustworthiness' comes into play in evaluating the Multiple Case Narrative as well as the work of other qualitative researchers. We adopt the notion 'conceptual perspective' which is consistent with the constructivist-narrative presumptions, as our basis for measuring trustworthiness. For communication with those who are not in the field of narrative research we prefer the use of the conventional terms, validity, reliability and generalization, which are elements of trustworthiness.

The issue of validity is a question of whether the researchers see what they think they see and whether this vision can be defended as sound because it is well-grounded conceptually and empirically. Validation means moving back and forth between induction and deduction, between experience and reflection on experience, between data and our conceptual perspectives, between our perspectives and our conclusions.

The requirement for reliability in the Multiple Case Narrative is that the researcher shows how the research has been done and decisions have been made, so that the reader could conduct an 'audit trail', examining the good sense and plausibility of the researcher's thoughts and actions. What determines the reliability of the study is the explicit presentation of the researcher's perspectives and criteria.

It is up to the readers to decide what aspects of the research may be generalized to new contexts. The researcher has an obligation to support this process by providing a rich, detailed, thick description in the report.

There are three types of generalizations: case-to-case generalization, analytic generalization and generalization from sample to population.

[a] The concept of case-to-case generalization is based on the degree to which the situation studied matches other situations in which one is interested.

[b] Analytic generalization serves to help us expand our theoretical statements beyond the data at hand. By linking the specific research questions to larger theoretical constructs, the writer shows how the particulars of his/her study serve to illuminate larger issues.

[c] Treating the case narrative as a cluster of categories allows one to compare it systematically with other case narratives, and thus to strengthen its potential for case-to-population generalization. The validity of generalization to population can be strengthened as the number of case narratives is increased.

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