Research Design and Methodology III

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**Source:** Creswell, John W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among*

 *five traditions.* Sage Publications, 99-101.

## **Comment 1**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “I recommend that a researcher reduce her or his entire study to a single, overarching question and several sub-questions. Drafting this central question often takes considerable work because of its breadth and the tendency of some to form specific questions based on traditional training. To reach the overarching question, I ask qualitative researchers to state the broadest question they could possibly pose about their studies” (p. 99-100).

**Essential Element**

This comment is associated with the essential element of formulating and defending a research question.

**Additive/Variant Analysis**

Getting the research question right is of critical importance in guiding the qualitative research design and selecting an appropriate case study. Creswell (1998) recommends starting with an over-arching question that captures the main purpose of the study and then develop several sub-questions that further develop and support it. I agree that getting the research question right is difficult and requires a broad perspective on the problem being researched but also focused enough that it can accomplish the central purpose of the study.

**Contextualization**

I have achieved enough clarity about a potential case study on the leadership cohorts that I facilitated at Ashley Furniture that I can proceed with developing the research question and sub-questions that will anchor my dissertation research. I envision an iterative process that begins with submitting a “live” Concept Paper for Assignment #3 for SR 958-52; getting feedback and guidance on the submission from Dr. McClane and Dr. Ward; then refining the research question and sub-questions further until they are ready to be included in my dissertation proposal. This iterative process will fulfill the essay requirement for SR 958 and prepare me well for writing the dissertation proposal.

## **Comment 2**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “An author typically presents a small number of sub-questions that follow the central question. One model for conceptualizing these sub-questions is to present them in two sets: issue questions and topical questions” (p.101). Creswell (1998) describes issue-oriented questions as addressing the major concerns and perplexities to be resolved in the case study. Topical sub-questions are designed to gather the anticipated information that is needed to adequately describe the case study. Both issue and topical sub-questions conceptualize the meaning and logic of the central research question.

**Essential Element**

This comment is associated with the essential element of formulating and defending a research question and sub-questions.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I find this distinction between issue-driven sub-questions and topical sub-questions to be helpful. The issues and complexities that I want to address in my case study involves how the transformative learning process that I facilitated at Ashley Furniture impacted the development of leaders and managers in their organization. Good sub-questions will help me to explore the nuances of their experience and the ways in which Ashley leaders have changed and developed their capacities by participating in their leadership cohorts.

**Contextualization:**

The results of this case study will be very valuable in providing research support and credibility to the change processes that my consulting firm offers its clients. We have achieved significant success in offering these leadership cohorts because they have been well-received, and they have resulted in anecdotal reports of how leaders and managers have benefited from their experiences. However, we cannot document how they have changed or the ways they have developed as leaders without doing qualitative research. I have always had a professional interest in how deep change and transformation occurs in various contexts and this

dissertation research will help me to gain a new level of understanding and expertise in the field of leader development.

**Source:** Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage Publications, 38-40.

**Comment 13**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Naturalist inquiry, in contrast to the positivist perspective, is value bound in at least five ways (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 38):

1. Inquiries are influenced by the researcher’s values.
2. Inquiry is influenced by the choice of paradigm that guides the research.
3. Inquiry is influenced by the choice of theory that guides the collection and analysis of the qualitative data.
4. Inquiry is influenced by the values embedded in the context being researched.
5. Values are either value-resonant or value-dissonant and must be congruent if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results.

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential elements of thematic analysis and drawing meaningful insights.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I agree with Lincoln and Guba (1985) that qualitative research is value bound and the inquiry must be value-resonant to achieve meaningful results. This is especially true if the researcher embraces the Christian worldview in which ultimate values and dimensions of reality are revealed in Scripture. The paradigm

level of inquiry would guide the research in terms of the thematic analysis and interpretation of the data.

**Contextualization:**

Completing the Omega Graduate School prospectus requires that the doctoral researcher provide a variant analysis of the proposed dissertation and then critique it, providing the logical basis for the research that is being proposed. This is a challenging process that would require the researcher to not only be aware of his or her own values, but also be able to articulate why the proposed research has validity. The case study that I will be proposing will be investigating the impact of transformational learning on the growth and development of leaders and managers at Ashley Furniture. There are implicit Christian values that inform the facilitation of the leadership cohorts that will ultimately provide the qualitative interviews for the research. It will be important for me to recognize, validate, and be congruent with those values when analyzing and interpreting the data.

## **Comment 24**

**Quote/Paraphrase:**

*Utilization of tacit knowledge.* The naturalist argues for the legitimate use of tacit or intuitive knowledge in addition to propositional knowledge in language form. Tacit knowledge captures the nuances of multiple realities that can only be accessed in this way. Much of the interaction between the researcher and the participant occurs at this level and because tacit knowledge mirrors more fairly

and accurately the value patterns of the investigator (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 40).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential elements of thematic analysis and drawing meaningful insights.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I agree that tacit or intuitive knowledge will be essential in capturing the essence and nuanced meaning from the dialogue and interaction of the qualitative interviews. I also understand and agree that trusting one’s tacit knowledge is where the researcher’s values are embedded and expressed. Being conscious of the underlying values that give life to the tacit knowledge and intuitive insights will be important in capturing valid and reliable interpretations of the data.

**Contextualization:**

Being a therapist and executive coach for many years has resulted in developing a strong intuitive capacity that I do trust in my professional work. I think the tacit knowledge and intuitive sense that I have will be an asset to the dissertation research. One of the major reasons for wanting to do in-person interviews is to utilize that intuitive strength to tease out the significance of the leader cohort experience for the participants. Many people do not have the language for the process of deep change in their values and identity. They intuitively know that they had a significant experience but have difficulty putting it into words. I

believe that my tacit knowledge of spiritual and psychological development will help the participants find the language for what they have experienced in the cohorts. I believe that teasing out the nuanced meaning of their experiences will provide for a richer qualitative case study.

**Source:** Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and*

*implementation*. John Wiley & Sons, 110-116.

**Comment 15**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “The most common way of deciding which type of interview to use is by determining the amount of structure desired…. If placed on a continuum, the range of structure varies from highly structured, questionnaire-driven interviews to unstructured, open-ended, conversational formats” (p. 110). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) offer a third alternative which is the *semi-structured* interview that is composed of a mix of more and less structured questions that allow the interviewer to probe for meaningful insights as they arise in the conversation.

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential elements of sampling techniques and data analysis.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The semi-structured interview would be more aligned with my research interests than either a questionnaire-driven interview process or an open-ended

conversation that may not capture the deeper change process that I am looking for. I also like the flexibility of pursuing threads of insight and meaning as they unfold in the personal interviews and not restricted to set questions made in advance.

**Contextualization:**

Having been a therapist for many years, I have a lot of intuition, empathy, and skill to pursue a thread of insight or meaning that would add a lot of explanatory value to the qualitative case study. However, the research question and sub-questions are needed guardrails to ensure that the primary goals of the study are accomplished. I anticipate that the process of developing the dissertation proposal will strike the right balance.

**Comment 26**

Quote/Paraphrase: “There is no question that the Internet has changed the world. It has also increased the possibilities for the myriad ways that one can collect data through online venues in conducting qualitative research through various information communication technologies (ICT’s) and computer mediated communication (CMC) tools…. Like any data collection method, conducting online interviews has its strengths and weaknesses” (p. 115-116).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential element of sampling techniques.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I anticipate that some of the interviews that I will need for my case study will need to be done online through Zoom or Teams software platforms. One of the strengths of online data gathering is that the researcher is not limited by geographical distance. However, I have concerns about losing the value of being present in the room with the participants. One’s presence makes a difference in creating psychological safety and the willingness on the part of the participant to share freely and deeply. I believe that a blend of in-person interviews and online sessions will help to mitigate the problem of using media tools for qualitative interviews.

**Contextualization:**

My greatest concern in using Zoom or Teams for qualitative interviews is losing the data through technological problems. Exactly how to save the interview content on Zoom in case it is disrupted, fails to record, or gets misplaced is critically important. There is a gap in my technical knowledge in recording and securing the data that I need to close. I have experienced many technical problems and breakdowns as a lead consultant and have learned to always have a backup plan in case the technology fails. I need to find a fail-safe way to secure the online interviews for my dissertation because it would be very difficult to repeat the process and achieve the same results.

**Source:** Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory*

*and practice.* Sage Publications, 58, 113-117.

### **Comment 17**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** "What the various phenomenological approaches share in common is a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning" (p. 113).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential element of data analysis.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

The phenomenology of transformation is an important question that I would very much like to explore. What is the *lived experience* of transformation that would create shifts in a person's meaning system, values, and identity?  I agree that there is a intuitive process of how a person transforms his or her experience into greater consciousness and depth of meaning that makes us essentially human.

**Contextualization:**

The rich descriptions of how participants have experienced the Leadership Cohorts at Ashley Furniture will provide the phenomenological elements involved in the process of transformational learning. The research challenge is determining the relationship between these phenomenological elements and its effect on the development of the leaders who participated in the cohorts. I need to understand

more clearly how phenomenological methods and a thematic analysis would work in a qualitative case study to answer the research question of my dissertation.

## **Comment 28**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** "The phenomenon may be a program, and organization, or a culture. When used as a framework for program evaluation, phenomenology aims to capture the essence of program participants' experiences" (p.116).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential elements of thematic analysis and data coding.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I agree that program effectiveness and cultural impact is an important application of phenomenology and relevant to my dissertation case study. The Leadership Cohorts that my company facilitated at Ashley Furniture were designed to be an effective program of leader development while also providing a process of experiential learning in the context of a leadership community. How the participants experienced the leadership cohort and its relationship to personal transformation need to be linked.

**Contextualization:**

The participant interview questions need to be designed in such a way that the phenomena or lived experience of the Leadership Cohorts is addressed so that the deeper change process can also be more fully understood. This would mean that

the program itself can be evaluated along with the experiential learning and deep change process in that was likely to occur through the process.

## **Comment 39**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** "One can employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance of using methods that capture people's experience of the world without conducting a phenomenological study that focuses on the essence of shared experience..." (p. 117).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential element of qualitative data analysis.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I agree with Patton (2014) that my dissertation research can have a phenomenological perspective without conducting a phenomenological study that would require getting at the essence of the Leadership Cohort experience. I want to understand the nature of the participants’ lived experience in my case study to gain insight into transformative learning theory and change process that underlies their experience.

**Contextualization:**

Qualitative case study will be the primary research method deployed in response to my research question: "How do the participants in a leadership development cohort change through the process of transformational learning?"  While focusing

on qualitative case study research, there will be phenomenological elements and perspectives from the participants that will need to be analyzed and interpreted in order fully understand the transformational learning process.

## **Comment 410**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Patton (2014, p. 58) identifies 12 different approaches to qualitative interviewing including the following:

1. The ethnographic interview

2.  The traditional social science research interview

3.  The phenomenological interview

4.  The social constructionist interviewing

5.  The hermeneutic interview

6.  Narrative inquiry interviewing

7.  The life story interview

8.  Interpretive interactionism

9.  Oral history interviewing

10.  Postmodern interviewing

11.  Investigative interviewing

12.  Pragmatic interviewing

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential elements of data gathering and qualitative interviewing.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

After reading Patton's (2014) explanation of these 12 types of interviews, both the phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches stand out as the most relevant for my dissertation case study. I want to understand, analyze, and interpret the lived experience of the leaders who have participated in the Life Legacy Groups sponsored by the Ashley Furniture Company. The interview questions would probe both the content and meaning of their stories as well as the phenomena that they experienced through the facilitation of transformational learning. The other interview approaches would not be appropriate for the purpose of my research.

**Contextualization:**

I believe that my dissertation case study will require a combination of hermeneutic and phenomenological interviewing to grasp the underlying themes, change processes, and theoretical constructs that are implied in the lived experience of the leadership cohorts. Since the focus of my research question is on how leaders have changed and developed through the process of participating in the cohort, the interview process needs to uncover both the depth of their experience and the multi-layered meanings that the participants have ascribed to it. My hope is that the case study will make a significant contribution to what it means to lead an organization that values the engagement, empowerment, and fulfillment of its people.

## **Source:** Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage

## Publications, 15, 37-38.

**Comment 111**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** Yin (2018) offers a twofold definition of a case study that has evolved over five previous editions of his foundational text. “A case study is an empirical method that

* investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when
* the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

The second part of the definition of case studies arises because phenomenon and context are not always sharply distinguishable in real-world situations” (p. 15).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential element of data analysis.

**Additive/Variant Analysis:**

I agree with Yin (2018) that the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident or distinguished in real-world situations. My proposed case study is within a specific context, the leadership cohorts of Ashley Furniture, but the phenomenon that I am interested in is how the process of deep change occurs through the group facilitation of transformational learning.

**Contextualization:**

My dissertation proposal needs to be written so that the purpose of my study is clear and the research question and sub-questions can tease out how leaders change as they experience the facilitation of experiential exercises in cohorts of 10-15 people. I envision that the central research question will be broad in scope, while the sub-questions drill down into particular ways that leaders have developed through the Life Legacy cohort experience. This two-fold way of analyzing the qualitative data from the participants will be very helpful in providing research support for a powerful and credible training process that not only develops the capacities of an organization’s leaders, but also contributes to creating a culture of empowerment and transformation.

## **Comment 212**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “Besides making it easier to design your case study, having some theory or theoretical propositions will later play a critical role in helping you to generalize the lessons learned from your case study. This role of theory has been characterized throughout this book as the basis for *analytic generalization* and has been contrasted with another way of generalizing the results from empirical studies known as *statistical generalization*” (p. 37).

**Essential Element:**

This comment is associated with the essential element of research design.

**Contextualization:**

My challenge is to choose a theory that will align with and support the conceptual framework for the transformational leadership pathway that I have developed in the *Human Operating System* (Nicholson and Murray, 2021). This framework as described in chapter 4 of the book provides a heuristic tool for a coach, counselor, or consultant to lead experiential and integrative change processes for leaders and their organizations. I want the dissertation case study to provide research support for the integrative change process that I advocate for in the HOS and my consulting practice. I want to do this with integrity so that the coherence and credibility is in place for developing, equipping, and resourcing change agents who will be transformational in their work.

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