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CHAPTER 2

Qualitative Research Paradigms and Traditions

CHAPTER PREVIEW

One of the essential features of qualitative inquiry is its focus on the connection between researcher and theoretical framework, or research orientation. This theoretical framework is formed by the researcher's careful and continual exploration of research paradigms and traditions. As you consider a research problem to be investigated, it is important to reflect upon how you define scientific pursuit and which research paradigm(s) and tradition(s) are best suited for your study. A solid research orientation involves understanding and utilizing various research paradigms and traditions to construct your research design. This chapter examines qualitative research paradigms and traditions and describes the roles they play in decisions about research design. Figure 2.1 depicts these "foundational" aspects of qualitative research design.

A CAUTIONARY NOTE

Qualitative inquiry is an evolving practice in counseling and education; thus, there are several ideas in the literature of what constitutes a *research paradigm* and a *research tradition*. Before presenting our construction of what these look like in qualitative inquiry, we would like to highlight some potential challenges that may influence you as you integrate qualitative research into your practice. First, the terms *research paradigm* and *research tradition* are often used interchangeably in the literature. To complicate matters, these terms are also labeled as *theoretical frameworks* or *research methods*. Inattention to the concepts of research paradigm and research tradition independently may be problematic because discussion of a researcher's orientation may be minimized, leaving the reader with little to no information about his or her assumptions, values, and orientations. Thus, research paradigms and traditions may not be adequately described in published studies.

Another challenge with classifying research paradigms and traditions relates to the process of labeling, which is counter to many of the characteristics of qualitative

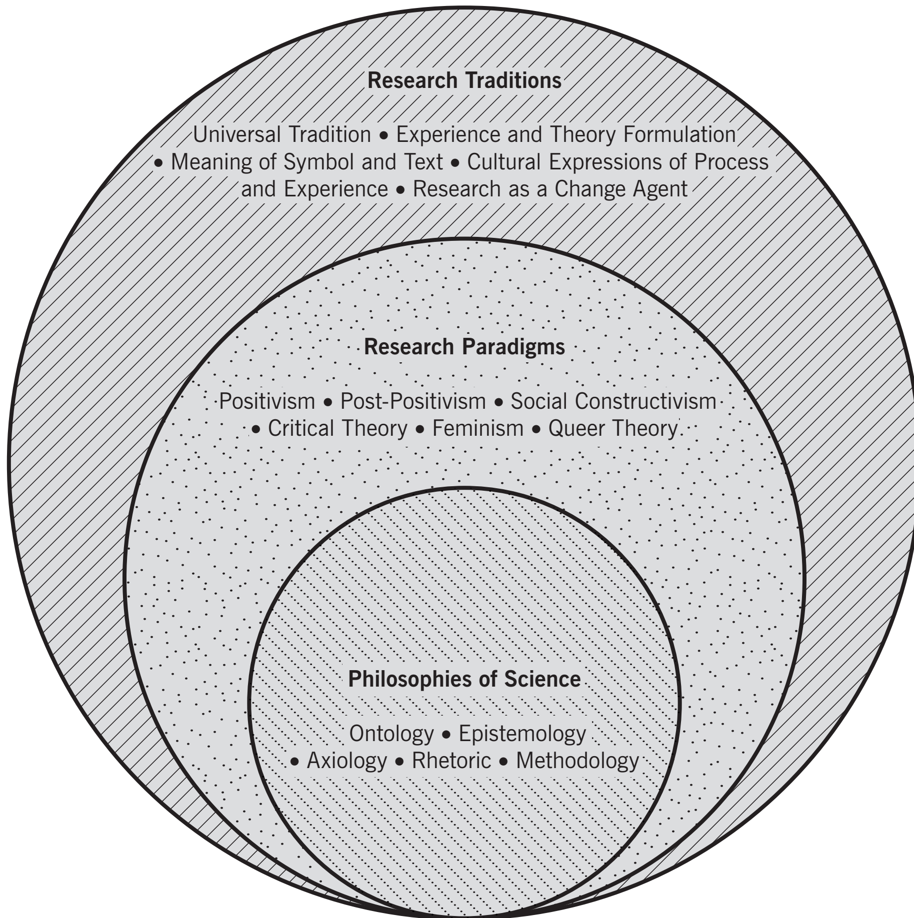


FIGURE 2.1. The foundations of qualitative inquiry.

research. As described in Chapter 1, qualitative inquiry is a holistic approach that often values subjective meaning of a research problem and context as well as collaboration between researcher and participant in constructing and understanding knowledge. Placing an "objective" label on this process is difficult because qualitative researchers have varying ways of conceptualizing their values, assumptions, and orientations for qualitative inquiry, in general, and for a research problem, more specifically.

Because of the complexities with labeling in qualitative inquiry, a related challenge is that several research paradigms and traditions overlap one another. Thus, many share perspectives related to how a research problem should be investigated. Furthermore, research traditions borrow terms from each other in data analysis or, in many cases, label very similar data collection and analytic procedures with different terminology. Because of this overlap, research traditions are not necessarily fixed entities and can change depending on the nature of a study. This adaptation may be helpful because it allows the qualitative researcher some flexibility in situating a research problem or question.

The process of conducting qualitative research within each of the traditions is a final challenge because there is not a unified method among qualitative researchers within a particular research tradition. For instance, there are several divergent ideas about what phenomenological research is as well as competing views of how and when "theory" enters grounded theory research. In sum, we are cognizant of these challenges as we present our construction of the categories of research paradigms and traditions. Before discussing these categories, it is important to reflect on what constitutes science and the pursuit of knowledge and truth in counseling and education (see Activity 2.2 on page 42).

PHILOSOPHIES OF SCIENCE

As noted in Chapter 1, qualitative inquiry has some flexibility in the way data are collected and analyzed, particularly how the researcher and participant view a research question. This flexibility allows for variations in how science is unfolded by the researcher in conducting qualitative research. Science is defined as the systematic search, observation, analysis, and presentation of knowledge (Galuzzo, Hilldrup, Hays, & Erford, 2008). In qualitative research, the pursuit of science involves integrating the assumptions and practices of research paradigms and traditions as the researcher constructs a research design. Scientific pursuit should have some flexibility, as is needed, in qualitative research design. There are several core **philosophies of science** that are embedded within research paradigms and traditions that help construct scientific inquiry in qualitative research. These include ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology. Essentially, these core philosophies overlap and build upon each other to describe the relationship between the knower and the known in qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2006). Before reading these descriptions, complete Reflexive Activity 2.1.

Ontology refers to the nature of reality; in qualitative research the term points to the degree to which a "universal truth" is sought about a particular construct or process in qualitative research. Is reality objective or subjective? Is it universal (*etic*) or contextual (*emic*)? Are there factors that influence the reality of a phenomenon? Reality can be thought of along a continuum, with objective truth (*Truth*) at one end and subjective or multiple truths at the other end (*truth*). Qualitative inquiry in counseling and education generally involves examination of how "real" a phenomenon is through the subjective lenses of both researchers and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005). Your ontological perspective is characterized by the degree to which you believe that reality is limited or predetermined.

For example, let's consider the construct of family discord. Researchers who fall toward the left side of the continuum (*Truth*) would argue that there is a universal definition or reality of what family discord looks like for families. With enough investigation, information about family discord may be known and thus applied universally to work with families. Alternatively, researchers who fall toward the right side of the continuum (*truth*) would assert that a complete, universal understanding of family discord is im-

REFLEXIVE ACTIVITY 2.1. Philosophies of Science

Review the following statements and mark an "***X***" next to those you endorse.

____ There is only one reality or truth for any phenomenon.

____ Multiple truths exist for a phenomenon; however, some truths are more salient than others.

____ Truth does not exist as there are multiple, equally valid, truths.

____ There is a limit to what we can know about a construct.

____ Knowledge acquisition is limitless.

____ Knowledge changes as social interactions change.

____ A researcher should not integrate personal and professional values in a research design.

____ Participant values should be considered in research design.

____ Researcher subjectivity can be an important asset to qualitative research.

____ It is inappropriate to use the first-person voice in a research report.

____ It is inappropriate to use the second-person voice in a research report.

____ Presenting data as numbers is more valuable than presenting participant stories or narratives.

____ Research designs should be selected based on research paradigms and traditions.

____ Methodology drives research questions.

____ Research questions drive methodology.

possible, since the construct must be understood in relation to a particular context. That is, multiple notions or beliefs about what constitutes family discord are equally valid and valued.

Epistemology refers to the study of the process of knowing; in qualitative research it refers to the degree to which knowledge is believed to be constructed by the research process, in general, and in the context of the researcher–participant relationship, more specifically. That is, epistemology is the knowledge acquisition process for the phenomenon of interest; it is "how we know what we know" (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Hansen, 2004; Ponterotto, 2005). Is knowledge limited? A majority of qualitative researchers view knowledge as being essentially unlimited and actively constructed within the context of the research relationship. An epistemological perspective in qualitative inquiry typically involves the notion that knowledge about a research topic is limited only by the quality of the interactions of those involved in the research process.

Let's examine this philosophy of science for the construct of family discord. Researchers with the epistemological stance that knowledge is limited would argue that the research relationship content is likely irrelevant to knowledge acquisition. That is, how we know what we know about family discord comes from a more generic, finite research process. For those who believe that knowledge is unlimited, knowledge about

family discord can be continually expanded with changes in research design as well as in research relationships and dynamics.

Axiology encompasses the researcher's values and assumptions in qualitative inquiry and how they influence research questions and research design. Additionally, it includes considering the values of participants and the research setting (Ponterotto, 2005). What is the role of values in qualitative inquiry? Do you think values should be considered in research design? How are our scientific pursuits guided by what we as researchers value as knowledge and reality? Qualitative researchers are encouraged to reflect on what role, if any, their values play in the research process (see Reflexive Activity 2.2.).

Objectivity ⟵——————————⟶ Reflexivity

For the family discord example, "objective" researchers would attempt to minimize the influences of values in research and thus try to maintain the research relationship as neutral, uninfluenced by the researchers' assumptions or experiences. Researchers

REFLEXIVE ACTIVITY 2.2. Values in Research

Identify values you hold about your profession. List these in the left column. Next, review each of these values and brainstorm ways in which they may influence how you conduct qualitative research. List these in the right column.

Professional values	Influences in qualitative inquiry

would likely not disclose their perspectives related to family discord so as not to "bias" participants. An axiological stance that valued researchers as an instrument in the design would emphasize the importance of relating their experience and assumptions about family discord to the research–participant relationship. The research relationship would likely be a collaborative process of investigating family discord.

Rhetoric encompasses the various formats in which qualitative data are presented. As described in later chapters, data can be presented in various formats depending on the selected research paradigm, tradition, and general study design. How you present data involves decisions about the use of voice (i.e., first, second, third) of the researcher(s) and participants, terminology with which to present data collection and analytic methods, and the degree to which narratives, thematic categories, and/or numbers are presented as findings (Creswell, 2006; Ponterotto, 2005). Should data be presented in narratives or numbers, or both? Generally, the more narratives allowed in qualitative inquiry, the more "voice" participants have in a report. However, the greater degree a researcher takes the "expert stance" in report writing, the less participant voice may be present, no matter the use of voice.

Researcher voice ←——————→ Participant voice

This philosophy of science relates heavily to the role of voice and is discussed in more detail in later chapters. Researchers who value a prominent researcher voice in data presentation would likely present more aggregated data related to family discord; this might involve statistics and/or minimal narratives and discussion of the findings using the third person (e.g., "The researcher found . . . ") with greater attention to researcher interpretation of the findings. Those who value participant voice in data presentation would likely provide participant quotes and narratives and attempt to represent data from participants' perspectives. When they provide interpretations, researchers use first and second voice (e.g., "We interviewed 21 participants . . . ").

Methodology as a philosophy of science involves the actual practice of qualitative inquiry. It is heavily influenced by other core philosophies of science. Our ideas about what constitutes truth and knowledge in the context of the values of those involved in the research process shape how we design a qualitative study. Thus, methodology encompasses decisions about aspects such as selection of research paradigms and traditions, research questions, and data collection methods (Creswell, 2006). Should data designs be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of these (i.e., mixed methods; see Chapter 4)? Thus, a study of family discord could involve qualitative or quantitative data, or both.

Quantitative ←——————→ Quantitative

In sum, scientific pursuit involves an active and continual reflection on how the researcher envisions the intersection of perspective (ontology), knowledge construction (epistemology), values (axiology), and dissemination of findings (rhetoric). These overlap and influence research design decisions (methodology). Figure 2.2 illustrates these considerations using a research problem as a guide. In addition, complete Activity 2.1 on the next page to practice describing and distinguishing these components of science.

Ontology

Is career aspiration a universal or context-specific phenomenon?

What can be known about the student's career aspirations?

Should students' perspectives be considered in "discovering" career aspirations?

Epistemology

Is there a limit to what can be known about the career aspirations of Latino students?

Is knowledge contextual (i.e., specific to the high school setting, current research relationship)?

How does the method by which knowledge about the topic is obtained affect data collection?

Methodology

How are data on career aspirations collected based on other philosophical constraints?

Which research tradition is most appropriate for examining Latino students' career aspirations?

Rhetoric

Should career aspirations be described numerically or in narrative form?

Are findings more effectively presented through the researcher or participants' voices?

How will validity issues be presented?

Axiology

What role do research values play in how Latino career aspiration is examined?

What are the values of the Latino students?

How might the values of the particular high school(s) influence qualitative inquiry?

FIGURE 2.2. Career aspirations of Latino high school students.

ACTIVITY 2.1. Describing Philosophies of Science

Select a salient research problem in counseling or education. Using the five core philosophies of science, brainstorm various questions you could explore.

RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Research paradigms can be thought of as belief systems based on the core philosophies of science (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Ponterotto, 2005). The ways by which you come to conceptualize the five core philosophies of science for various research questions influence and are influenced by various paradigms that include positivism, post-positivism, social constructivism, critical theory, feminism, and queer theory. You may adhere differentially to these belief systems, given their various ideas about what the research process and scientific pursuit look like. Table 2.1 illustrates the relationships among various research paradigms and ideas about scientific pursuit.

Positivism refers to the assumption that researchers can arrive at an objective, universal truth through direct observation and experience of phenomena. Thus, only verifiable claims should be considered genuine knowledge. Positivists are primarily concerned with empirically verifying existing theory through hypothesis testing, with goals of operationally measuring constructs, replicating methods across disciplines, and generalizing knowledge to a population (Patton, 2002). In order to achieve these goals, positivist researchers seek to maintain objectivity in research design by establishing a clear boundary with research participants, avoiding a discussion of values of those involved in the research, and using well-known statistical procedures to control contextual variables that impact a study (Galuzzo et al., 2008). Positivism has dominated and characterized scientific pursuit for several centuries, particularly in quantitative studies.

To illustrate positivism, consider the following research question: Is behavioral therapy effective in the treatment of phobias? To address this question, a researcher would develop hypotheses and establish a research design using treatment and control groups, with randomized sampling procedures, and operationally define and objectively measure phobic responses using a standardized treatment manual for behavioral therapy. Through a controlled design, the researcher might demonstrate that a group of participants that received behavioral interventions (i.e., treatment) had less phobic responses than participants in a control group, who may not have received any counseling intervention.

The belief that theory should be tested to be verified *and* falsified led to the development of **post-positivism**. In this approach theories should be falsified in order to strengthen them (Patton, 2002). Although post-positivists hold similar beliefs about science as positivists, they assert that universal reality can never fully be realized because you cannot say with complete certainty that a theory fully describes a phenomenon or construct. Although post-positivists argue that reality or universal truths exist, they state that you cannot fully measure or understand them. With this paradigm, issues of validity, reliability, and alternative hypotheses are heavily emphasized. Consider again the example of the treatment of phobias. Theories surround both behavioral therapy and phobias, yet the post-positivist would seek to find other therapies that could be effective in the treatment of phobias while exploring potential sources of error in measuring effectiveness across all therapies. If a researcher is able to show that behavioral therapy is most effective for the treatment of phobias, the theory is strengthened.

As scientific inquiry increased in counseling and education, many viewed the approaches of earlier paradigms incongruent with characteristics of qualitative research. They argued that, although these paradigms are effective in understanding general

TABLE 2.1. Research Paradigms and Philosophies of Science

Paradigms and accompanying philosophies of science	Foci in qualitative inquiry
Positivism, post-positivism	
Ontology: There is a universal truth that can be known (positivism) or approximated (post-positivism), and the researchers' findings correspond to that truth in varying degrees. *Epistemology*: Knowledge is obtained through measurable experience with participants and may be applied across a population. These experiences can be directly observed (positivism) or both directly and indirectly measured (post-positivism). *Axiology*: Research relationships have minimal influence on the results, and researchers should remain emotionally neutral. Research may be value-free. *Rhetoric*: "Neutral" report writing and third-person voice are used. *Methodology*: Structured methods and designs help control and manipulate conditions. Research is considered scientific if internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity are addressed.	• What's *really* going on in the real world? • How do the researcher's findings correspond to a truth shared within the scientific community? • What can be known about a particular theory? • To what degree can we measure accurately a phenomenon? • What other hypotheses might explain the research problem?
Social constructivism	
Ontology: Multiple realities of a phenomenon exist. *Epistemology*: Knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants. *Axiology*: There is an emphasis on the values of the researcher, participants, and research setting. *Rhetoric*: Data largely reflect the participants' voices and thoroughly describe the roles of the researcher and research setting in understanding the research problem. *Methodology*: Decisions about what and how research problems are studied are largely determined collaboratively between researcher and participants. Research is considered scientific if it is contextually relevant and trustworthiness has been established.	• How do participants conceptualize the research problem? • What contextual factors influence how participants and researchers construct, study, and report research findings?
Critical theory, feminism, and queer theory	
Ontology: Reality is subjective and may be influenced by oppressive experiences. *Epistemology*: Knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants. *Axiology*: The researcher's values are instrumental in acknowledging social injustice and promoting change. *Rhetoric*: Participants' voices are central to reporting findings. *Methodology*: The research design seeks to minimize exploitive processes in qualitative inquiry by using appropriate data collection methods and considering how results may affect the social experiences of participants.	• In what ways has the role of gender been ignored in qualitative inquiry? • What influences do forms of oppression (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism) have on understanding the research problem? • How might qualitative inquiry create social and political change within and outside the research process?

Sources: Patton (2002) and Ponterotto (2005).

counseling and educational processes, there were several unanswered questions about these processes. For instance, there was growing concern that findings were not applicable to all and that they minimized and marginalized various groups. As such, several paradigms were introduced to attend to the context in which participants live and experience phenomena and to incorporate participants' and researchers' subjective voices (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). After you review the following paradigms, complete Activity 2.3.

Social constructivism is a belief system that assumes that "universal truth" cannot exist because there are multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices that can label truth in scientific pursuit. This paradigm also has been referred to as **postmodernism**. Social constructivists argue that reality about counseling and education phenomena should never be labeled as objective since the voices of researchers and participants are biased and seated in different cultural experiences and identities. These researchers seek to construct knowledge through social interactions as well as to understand how individuals construct knowledge. Cultural, historical, and political events and processes influence these interactions. A collaborative dialogue among researcher and participants about defining and understanding the research problem as well as collecting and interpreting findings is highly valued (Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). Thus, those who identify primarily as social constructivists enter a research setting with **foreshadowed problems** rather than main and alternative hypotheses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). With social constructivism, the notion of *trustworthiness* (discussed in Chapter 7) replaces the concepts of *reliability* and *validity* for establishing scientific rigor.

With the phobia example, social constructivists would conceptualize phobia as a relative construct that can be understood only within the social context of the participants who may be experiencing it. Essentially, there is no universal definition of phobia. Furthermore, social constructivists would assert that various therapies to treat phobias are contextual and thus their "effectiveness" largely depends on the environment and situation in which they are implemented, the attitudes of the counselor–researcher and participants related to a particular therapy and to phobias in general, and the interaction between the two.

Critical theory, **feminism**, and **queer theory** are extensions of social constructivism. With these paradigms, researchers not only seek to understand a phenomenon through various subjective lenses, but they also strive to create social and political changes to improve the lives of participants. Thus, they closely examine how social norms are manifested in both positive and negative ways in participants' lives. Followers of these paradigms view researcher objectivity as impossible and subjectivity as something that should be readily acknowledged and valued. The researcher is seen as often changed by the research process (Patton, 2002).

Critical theory can be considered the most influential of the three paradigms, with the largest focus. Specifically, critical theorists assume that participants' experiences, and thus constructions of various phenomena, may be influenced by social injustices. In addition, the research process in general may exploit participants because their voices are often minimized and objectified. Critical theorists strive to make qualitative inquiry a political endeavor that facilitates social action to benefit those without power. Thus, advocacy against various oppressive experiences is a key concept.

In addition to valuing political action, **feminism** as a paradigm places emphasis on the roles of affect and researcher–participant relationship in the research process. Gender is an organizing principle in understanding and reporting research findings. For example, feminists argue that women have largely been excluded from scientific pursuit. When women are included in research, they are often pathologized in some manner. Feminists seek to address and dismantle methods by which "patriarchy" may play into qualitative inquiry. Feminism as a paradigm is expanding to address other forms of oppression beyond sexism. **Queer theory**, a recent paradigm, attends to how sexual orientation as a participant characteristic influences experiences of various phe-

nomena. Furthermore, attention is given to how oppression (i.e., heterosexism), experienced by virtue of being a member of a sexual minority, impacts participants' experiences (Patton, 2002).

Let us consider the phobia research example in relation to these three paradigms. Building upon the ideas that social constructivists might have about the social construction of phobia and clinical treatment, qualitative inquiry within one of these paradigms may seek to (1) understand the degree to which cultural variables (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) and related oppression from being a member of a minority status impact the understanding and presentation of phobias; (2) explore how various treatment approaches may be biased for certain groups; and (3) gather information about changes that need to be made in counseling practice to better serve participants.

ACTIVITY 2.2. Challenges with Research Traditions

Several research traditions are presented throughout this chapter in five major clusters. Review these traditions and discuss them in dyads in relation to the challenges presented earlier in this chapter.

ACTIVITY 2.3. Researcher Paradigms Debate

Some opponents of social constructivism, feminism, critical theory, and queer theory may argue that since findings are not generalizable to a larger population, they are not significant contributions to the larger scientific community. Divide into two groups and debate both sides of this argument.

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT 2.1. Examining Research Paradigms

As you think about developing your research proposal, it is important to consider possible benefits and challenges for each of the research traditions. To what degree do each of the following research traditions "fit" for you as you think of possible professional and research interests? Write down some of your thoughts below.

Tradition	Benefits	Challenges
Positivism		

Tradition	**Benefits**	**Challenges**
Post-positivism		
Social constructivism		
Critical theory		
Feminism		
Queer theory		

ACTIVITY 2.4. Interviewing Exercise

Interview a qualitative researcher in your profession about his or her research orientation. How did he or she arrive at this research orientation? What benefits and challenges does he or she perceive as related to the selected research orientation?

RESEARCH TRADITIONS

Building upon decisions of how you conceptualize science and select a research paradigm, choosing a research tradition creates a solid foundation for your research design. In this section, we outline several research traditions that are present in counseling and education qualitative research. These traditions are presented in five primary clusters that share underlying themes in qualitative inquiry:

- The universal tradition
- Experience and theory formulation
- The meaning of symbol and text
- Cultural expressions of process and experience
- Research as a change agent

As noted earlier, these clusters may overlap and be combined depending on the purpose of the qualitative inquiry. Below we provide a brief description of various research traditions. Data collection and analysis procedures are elaborated upon in later chapters. Table 2.2 provides an overview of the clusters' characteristics, and Table 2.3 outlines how a research topic pertaining to dual-career families can be examined based on the selected research tradition.

THE UNIVERSAL TRADITION: CASE STUDY

A **case** is a specific, unique, bounded system, and the **case study** allows the researcher to study individual(s), events, activities, or processes/elements of a bounded system (Creswell, 2003, 2006). For a case to be studied using a case study tradition, it must be *bounded* (i.e., have distinct boundaries), be functioning or have working parts, and indicate patterned behaviors such as sequence or coherence (Stake, 2005). That is, case studies are distinguished from other qualitative traditions because cases are researched in depth and the data are delineated by time period, activity, and place (Plummer, 2001). The organizing principle of a case study is the case itself, and the tradition is both a process and product of inquiry (Stake, 2005).

The emphasis in the case study is on examining a phenomenon as it exists in its natural context in order to identify the boundaries between the two (i.e., between the context and the phenomenon; Yin, 2003). Case studies may be the optimal research tradition to utilize when (1) counselors and educators are seeking to answer "how" and "why" questions, (2) control over events is limited, and (3) a phenomenon can be

TABLE 2.2. Research Tradition Clusters

	General characteristics	Unique characteristics
Cluster 1: The universal tradition		
Case study	• Boundary • Individual(s) • Event(s) • Processes(s) • Can be applied to most of the research traditions below	
Cluster 2: Experience and theory formulation		
Grounded theory	• Discovery • Direct experience • Phenomenon • Subjectivity	• Theory behind experience • Theory generation, primarily inductive, theoretical sampling, constant comparison • Divergent views on how external factors (e.g., researcher bias, previous literature or theory) affect inductive nature
Phenomenology		• Emphasis on universal and divergent aspects of an experience itself • Participants' direct, immediate experience within their worlds • Researcher takes "fresh" perspective and refrains from subjective interpretation (i.e., epoche)
Heuristic inquiry		• Interaction between experience and person • Topic has personal significance for researcher; results primarily increase researcher's self-knowledge with some implications for general field
Consensual qualitative research		• Experience and participants' perspectives useful in generating theory • Emphasis on research rigor and shared power among researchers, participants • Researchers' reflections may be present in initial data collection stages
Cluster 3: The meaning of symbol and text		
Symbolic interaction	• Language • Symbols • Story • Identity • Context	• Active response to symbols (language, cultural artifacts) to facilitate personal and shared meanings
Semiotics		• Search and interpretation of existing codes, signs, and symbols
Life history		• Personal meanings and context • Researcher's story becomes part of the interpretation • Researcher extracts meaning from historical review and applies to current context • May involve "rewriting history"
Hermeneutics		• "Sacred" text (scripture, mythology, history, politics, art) • Interpretation of both current and historical context
Narratology		• Structure of and communication methods in narrative emphasized

(cont.)

TABLE 2.2. *(cont.)*

	General characteristics	Unique characteristics
Cluster 4: Cultural expressions of process and experience		
Ethnography	• Culture • Prolonged engagement • Participant observation • Fieldwork	• Global description of culture or cultural group
Ethnomethodology		• Description of social patterns and rules, "everydayness"
Autoethnography		• First-person account of cultural event or process
Cluster 5: Research as a change agent		
Participatory action research	• Change of conditions, context, researcher, participants • Power analysis • Action research	

studied in its natural context (Denzin, 1989). Plummer (2001) described case studies as establishing "collective memories and imagined communities; and they tell of the concerns of their time and place" (p. 395).

Case studies have long been used in the social sciences as a way to carefully document life stories and events. Case studies have emerged from the tradition of biographical writing within the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, and history (Gilgun, 1994). This tradition is particularly useful in counseling and education because practitioners are interested both in unique dimensions of a case (often a client or student) as well as their more generalized applicability to other individuals.

Case selection is an important a priori activity for this tradition. Researchers select cases that offer the greatest opportunity to learn and thus most often the case or cases to which they have greatest accessibility (Stake, 2005). Furthermore, researchers decide whether they will study one or multiple case studies. **Single case studies** involve the examination of one phenomenon that is a single experiment and should meet the criteria for testing a theory with one case: "The single case can be used to determine whether a theory's propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (p. 40). For instance, a single case study might be warranted when a case represents a unique case, such as using feminist counseling techniques with an immigrant woman; whereas in **multiple case studies** (i.e., collective case studies), the researcher investigates several phenomena that are similar in nature, such as examining curricula in several counseling graduate programs in response to accreditation changes.

Alternatively, Stake (2005) categorized case studies in three ways: (1) **intrinsic case study**, wherein the researcher has an internally guided, or intrinsic, interest in a particular case; (2) **instrumental case study**, wherein the researcher seeks out cases to assist in an understanding of a particular issue exterior to a specific case; and (3) **collective case study**, wherein multiple cases are used to investigate a more general or broad phenomenon or population. Consider a case study of childrearing practices in stepfamilies where the case is the stepfamily. Depending on the researcher's purpose, the focus of the case study could be on a particularly successful parenting practice of a particular family (intrinsic case study), how conflict in childrearing is addressed in

stepfamilies (instrumental case study), or common conflicts occurring in childrearing for several stepfamilies (collective case study). Thus, the degree of applicability often shapes the type of case study.

Stake (2005) noted that the following components are often included in a case study report: the nature of the case; the case's historical background; the physical setting of the case; economic, political, legal, aesthetic, and other contexts; other cases to which this case is attached; and those informants through whom the case be known. Furthermore, researchers have several stylistic options for presenting a case or cases:

- How much to make the report a story;
- How much to compare with other cases;
- How much to formalize generalizations or leave that to readers; and
- Whether or not and how much to disguise case elements (Stake, 2005).

The case study tradition can be considered a universal tradition because it can be applied to several of the traditions described in the remainder of this chapter. The fact that most traditions discussed in this chapter deal with cases is evidence of the natural blending of research traditions. In the beginning of this chapter, we cautioned that traditions overlap one another at times in both purpose and activity. Case study as a tradition offers a distinctive benefit of case description, and thus many qualitative studies are case studies. If the purpose and intention of your research entail more than case description and comparison, however, we suggest that you use other traditions to guide your design.

One such tradition to which the case study tradition can be applied is the life history approach. The similarity between these two approaches is that the case study is often intended to document and interpret a life history. The **autobiographical case study** is one written by researchers about themselves (Reed-Danahay, 2001) and is rarely conducted at the graduate level (Creswell, 2003). The autobiography may involve personal writings and interviews as data sources. In the **biographical case study**, the researcher documents the history of an individual by using primarily archival data and other information sources about the person (Plummer, 2001). In conducting a **life history** the researcher follows the life of an individual, including the cultural norms that shape the person, and uses interviews with him or her as data collection (Denzin, 1989). An **oral history** is a way for the researcher to document events, including cultural themes emerging from individual interviews.

Although case studies may seem simple to conduct, they are in reality one of the most challenging research traditions to undertake (Stake, 1995). Much of the challenge emerges because there is an absence of structured guidelines for the case study inquiry. Yin (2003) identifies several considerations involved in data collection with the case study: (1) researcher skills with the case study format (e.g., attention to bias, listening, flexibility); (2) current training with the case study at hand; (3) protocol that guides the research process; (4) screening of potential case study ideas; and (5) pilot study of the phenomenon. In this preparation for data collection, researchers selecting the case study design should also consider how to identify the researcher perspective and resulting influence on the case study research design and process (Creswell, 2003). This identification allows readers to make decisions about the trustworthiness or qual-

ity of the case study results. Complete Activity 2.5 to consider how you might apply the case study tradition.

An example of a single case study involved an African American parent's perceptions of the process and influence of filial therapy, an extension of play therapy in which parents conduct child-centered play sessions (Solis, Meyers, & Varjas, 2004). For this case study, Solis conducted ten 90-minute filial therapy training sessions that included 30-minute play sessions for 7 of the 10 training sessions. Through analysis of interviews, parent questionnaires, and parent journal entries, several themes relating to the structure, content, and congruence of the approach with cultural values and influences on the parent, child, and parent–child relationship were noted. This exploratory research deepened current knowledge of the role of culture in play therapy efficacy.

Koliba, Campbell, and Shapiro (2006) conducted a multiple case study in New England schools in order to gain a comprehensive idea of how service learning was perceived in school and community contexts for three schools. During this case study inquiry, a skilled researcher spent 14 days conducting semistructured interviews with 280 people (e.g., teachers, parents, students, school board members) about the culture of the schools, the relationship between the school and community, and their perceptions of the implementation of service learning at the schools.

ACTIVITY 2.5. Applying the Universal Tradition

Select a topic of interest in your profession. Consider how the case study tradition might influence how you would study the research topic. How might the topic be addressed by each of the case study types described by Denzin (1989) and Stake (2005)?

EXPERIENCE AND THEORY FORMULATION: GROUNDED THEORY, PHENOMENOLOGY, HEURISTIC INQUIRY, AND CONSENSUAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The second cluster is one of the more popular collections of research traditions. This cluster includes grounded theory, phenomenology, heuristic inquiry, and consensual qualitative research. After reading about these four traditions, complete Activity 2.6.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory has been described as the most influential research tradition in social science disciplines today (Patton, 2002). The purpose of a grounded theory approach is to generate theory that is *grounded* in data regarding participants' perspectives for a particular phenomenon (Fassinger, 2005). It involves discovering new ways of examining the world, remaining close to the data, and allowing data to guide theory development (McLeod, 2001). The theories that are generated often explain a process or action surrounding an experience or a sequence of events pertaining to a particular topic.

One of the hallmark early characteristics of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is its **inductive approach**. That is, qualitative researchers approach a phenomenon by setting aside preconceived notions to formulate (but not test) a theory about that phenomenon, moving from simpler to more complex constructions or descriptions. In general, qualitative researchers select methods that allow for rich data collection useful for generating local or grand theories. Throughout data collection, researchers move back and forth to uncover a core category, or **constant comparison**, that will serve as the basis for theory development. Participants are selected based on their congruence with theoretical constructs, a process known as **theoretical sampling**. To allow data to drive new theory, data are often collected without reviewing prior literature extensively. However, qualitative researchers return to the literature as theory is generated. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) identified six general characteristics of grounded theory: (1) simultaneous data collection and analysis; (2) pursuit of emergent themes through early data analysis; (3) discovery of basic social processes within the data; (4) inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and synthesize these processes; and (5) integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions, and consequences of the process(es).

Grounded theory has roots in sociology. In 1967 Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss introduced the discovery-oriented approach, described above, after conducting research on terminal illness. Although Glaser and Strauss agree with many of the general characteristics of this approach, in the 1990s their ideas diverged regarding how purely inductive grounded theory should be (see Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glaser maintained that grounded theory as a research tradition serves to generate and validate theory based on present data, and that the approach should rely only on constant comparison (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006; Rennie, 1998). Strauss and Juliet Corbin believed that the approach could be used to verify existing theory (i.e., select data that might be congruent with preexisting theory or researcher assumptions) and to generate theory based on conditions related to a phenomenon that might not necessarily be grounded in present data. In essence, Strauss and Corbin's approach allows more voice for research subjectivity, existing theory, and potentially related conditions in explaining a phenomenon; Glaser argues that this allowance creates movement away from the "groundedness" of the approach (Rennie, 1998).

More recent work in grounded theory has shifted it from post-positivism to constructivism (see Charmaz, 2005; Clarke, 2005). Clarke (2005) expanded traditional grounded theory by assuming that multiple, contextualized truths and several social processes could explain a particular phenomenon. Essentially, the social world—wherein humans make meaning from interactions with others as well as from the material world—is the starting point for understanding a phenomenon. She acknowledged that the research process and reports are mediated by researchers' perspectives and, to this end, researchers should accentuate the "messiness" of models—that data do not fit perfectly into models, there is "no one right reading" of data (p. 8), and models cannot be oversimplified.

Grounded theory has several benefits, including its high degree of structure, emphasis on collecting large amounts of data to generate and eventually test a developing theory, its ability to fragment and analyze text, and its focus on the researcher's role and acknowledgment of biases. These same strengths also create challenges for grounded theory studies because data collection and analyses often rely on researchers' skills and

awareness of the role values play. Also, the large amount of data needed to generate theory is labor- and time-intensive. Finally, an additional challenge relates to determining the degree to which theories will transfer or apply to other settings.

To illustrate grounded theory in studying the therapeutic process, Rennie (1994) conducted interviews with 14 clients on an immediate counseling session to understand the processes and attitudes within the session. Using grounded theory procedures, Rennie discovered eight key categories that indicated client deference to therapists (e.g., meeting the perceived expectations of the therapist, fear of criticizing the therapist). Results helped inform theory about the construct of politeness in the therapeutic relationship. Related to educational reform and training principals, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) interviewed eight white teachers about the relationship between their perceptions of students of color and their own racial identities. Results indicated four equity traps, or barriers to successful academic outcomes, for students of color (i.e., deficit view, racial erasure, avoidance and employment of the gaze, and paralogical beliefs and behaviors).

Phenomenology

Whereas a grounded theory approach seeks to develop theory, the purpose of **phenomenology** is to discover and describe the meaning or essence of participants' lived experiences, or knowledge as it appears to consciousness. It is the understanding of individual and collective human experiences and how we actively think about experience (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Patton, 2002; Wertz, 2005). Qualitative researchers strive to assess participants' *intentionality*, or internal experience of being conscious of something. Phenomenology as a practice involves researchers approaching a phenomenon with a fresh perspective, as if viewing it for the first time, through the eyes of participants who have direct, immediate experience with it. This process begins with understanding the *Lebenswelt* or life-world of a participant and then searching for commonalities across participants to see how lived experiences relate to a phenomenon of interest. There is a unique dialogue between the person and the ordinary world, as self and world cannot be separated according to this approach. Consider the experience of grief. Phenomenologists would interview participants who have experienced grief on their awareness of their grief, how their grief intersects with their life-world, and what universal characteristics can be described about grief.

According to phenomenologists, human experience can be understood only by ignoring or setting aside prior explanations of phenomena found in literature and acknowledging and bracketing off researchers' values and assumptions regarding phenomena. This process is known as **epoche**, a Greek word for refraining from judgment (Moustakas, 1994). Participants are viewed as co-researchers because of their extensive firsthand knowledge of an experience. As researchers encounter experiences of a phenomenon, they move back and forth to assess the **essence** of the experience as well as variations of that experience. The final product is a written representation of the structure of an experience through several participants.

Although phenomenology as a concept was introduced by Kant in the mid-1700s, Edward Husserl (1859–1935) is credited as the father of phenomenology. Husserl's desire to understand better the social crisis in Europe post–World War I led him to phenomenology, with its roots in philosophy. Husserl applied the tradition to mental

health because he believed that human experience could not adequately be addressed through the more positivist, laboratory-like approaches being used in mental health disciplines (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Wertz, 2005). As Husserl viewed phenomena, anything that was a product of direct, immediate experience could not be understood with complete certainty (Groenewald, 2004).

Since Husserl, many philosophers and schools of thought have extended or slightly diverged from his thoughts on phenomenology, including the Duquesne empirical phenomenological approach (McLeod, 2001), de Rivera's conceptual encounter method (de Rivera, 2006), and the works of Sartre, Heidegger, Merlean-Ponty, Scheler, and Giorgi (Groenewald, 2004; Maso, 2001; McLeod, 2001). A common thread among the divergent thoughts on phenomenology is the value of subjective experience and the connection between self and world.

Applied to counseling research, a phenomenological approach would primarily value clients' perspectives of their problems and the counseling process. Consider two studies that explored participants' resiliency around surviving childhood sexual abuse (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Singh, Hays, Chung, & Watson, 2010). Through interviewing methods, both studies illuminated various resilience strategies that helped adult survivors thrive and make meaning of their abuse. In Bogar and Hulse-Killacky's (2006) study, a sample of primarily white women ($n = 8$ of 10) yielded five determinant clusters (i.e., interpersonally skilled, competent, high self-regard, spiritual, helpful life circumstances) and four process clusters (i.e., coping strategies, refocusing and moving on, active healing, achieving closure) for trauma recovery. From a sample of 13 South Asian women Singh and her colleagues (2010) described a connection between South Asian cultural context (i.e., gender, family, ethnic identity, acculturation) and resilience strategies (i.e., sense of hope, use of silence, social support, social advocacy, self-care). Findings from these studies could be useful for improving counseling practice with trauma survivors.

Phenomenology has also been applied to educational settings, as indicated by two studies (Alerby, 2003; Cornett-DeVito & Worley, 2005). Alerby conducted interviews with 25 11-year-old students on their experiences in school and found that students valued additional time for schoolwork, relationships with peers and teachers, more voice in school policy and rules, and general increased knowledge in school. Cornett-DeVito and Worley (2005) interviewed 21 college students with learning disabilities to understand what types of teacher communication were considered effective. Themes described as most desired for positive academic and social outcomes were teachers' interest, motivation, and competence with respect to instructing students with learning disabilities. With these studies, data based in the life-world of participants indicate ways by which teachers and other stakeholders can create a more effective learning environment for students.

Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic inquiry has roots in humanistic psychology and was founded by Clark Moustakas. The term *heuristic* originates from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means to discover or to find. Heuristic inquiry is considered a variation of phenomenology that emphasizes the essence of experience *and* the person in relation to that experience (Moustakas, 1990, 1994). Qualitative researchers using a heuristic approach seek to

understand moderately intense experiences of the human condition, such as grief, loss, love, anger, happiness, achievement, and mental health. These phenomena have some personal significance to researchers involved in qualitative inquiry. Heuristic inquiry as a tradition focuses on intense phenomena from the perspective of researchers with attention to how participants' experiences relate to researchers' increased self-awareness and knowledge. Thus, heuristic inquiry is somewhat autobiographical with implications for understanding social phenomena in general (Moustakas, 1990, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Sortino (1999), an educator, used a heuristic approach to understand better the experience of students with behavior disorders. In this dissertation, Sortino presented five vignettes of teaching experiences based on active participation in school activities with 20 students. Through these vignettes, he described a continuous process of reflecting on personal childhood experiences, his increasing insight into the experiences of the students, and methods by which special educators could more effectively work with this population.

Thus, the interaction between person and experience is personally relevant to heuristic researchers, as examined phenomena are experiences that they seek to reflect upon in collaboration with co-researchers and participants. Researchers' voices play an important role in describing and reflecting upon phenomena, with participants' voices as instrumental in facilitating ongoing reflection of the phenomena. Collaboration and sense of connectedness among researchers and participants in discovering and describing the essence of shared experiences are significant. For instance, McNeil (2005) used heuristic inquiry to describe the shared experiences of growing up with a diagnosis of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) for the researcher (diagnosed at age 40) and three adolescent females (diagnosed in second grade). The researcher compared themes derived from examining social, academic, and behavioral experiences of the three participants to her experiences with ADHD. Results indicated a need for support groups for students struggling with ADHD as well as professional development opportunities for educators to understand the influence of ADHD on students' sense of social and academic functioning.

Consensual Qualitative Research

Introduced to the social sciences in 1997, **consensual qualitative research** (CQR) integrates phenomenological, grounded theory, and other approaches. Hill and her colleagues (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) developed this approach to conduct qualitative inquiry that involves researchers selecting participants who are very knowledgeable about a topic and remaining close to data without major interpretation, with some hopes of generalizing to a larger population. CQR varies slightly from other grounded theory and phenomenological approaches because researchers often reflect on their own experiences with a phenomenon when developing interview questions. *Consensus* is key to this approach, as qualitative researchers use rigorous methods to facilitate agreement in interpretations among themselves and participants, as well as a general audience. Key components of CQR include open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 8); use of judges for consensus building; use of at least one auditor to evaluate the research (see Chapter 7); and use of domains, core ideas, and cross-analyses in data analysis (see Chapter 11).

Perspectives 2.1. Dr. Clara Hill on CQR

Dr. Clara Hill and her colleagues have been instrumental in introducing the CQR approach to researchers in the helping professions. In her own words, she describes why CQR was developed and the strengths and challenges to the approach (C. Hill, personal communication, December 4, 2006):

"We wanted to do qualitative research and found that the existing methods were hard to understand and implement. So after receiving extensive consultation from a qualitative expert and then trying out a number of different qualitative methods, we developed CQR and tried to write about it in a clear way so that others could easily use it. As we came to learn, however, qualitative methods are hard to learn and implement. It is probably always wise to work with a mentor on one's first study. In addition, I would add that the CQR method is still evolving and we continue to use it.

"The strengths of this approach are the use of consensus among judges, the use of auditors, and clear guidelines for communicating results. Another clear strength is that CQR is fun to do and it gets you close to the phenomenology of the topic. CQR is a very sociable way to do research because researchers meet together and do everything as a team.

"The challenges are the length of time it takes to complete a CQR project, some difficulty in switching between doing the domains/core ideas and the cross-analysis because these require very different skills, and then making sense of the results. An additional challenge is that the method is best suited for interview data and less suited for other forms of data.

"CQR is very flexible and can easily be used in counseling and education research. Any topic that can be explored in an interview is appropriate for CQR. Interviewees do need to be aware of their experiences of the topic, of course, to provide good interviews."

Hayes and his colleagues (1998) conducted a study examining therapists' views on countertransference that illustrates the characteristics of CQR. After observing sessions for eight therapy dyads, research assistants conducted 127 interviews with therapists on their perspectives of what constitutes countertransference. The six authors (Hayes et al., 1998) served as auditors and discussed how their values and expected findings influenced interview and data analysis methods. Findings indicated three major themes or domains that helped establish a working theory for better understanding countertransference.

One feature of CQR is its focus on data consistency to inform theory to allow for greater applicability within a setting. Another unique aspect of CQR is its emphasis on power in all aspects of the research process: Researchers share power among each other and via the use of research teams, as well as with participants. Part of the rationale for sharing power in the research process deals with the notion that researcher bias, or assumptions and values about what data are collected and how they are interpreted, is inevitable in qualitative inquiry. Sharing power allows various research team members to discuss how their personal and cultural identities and assumptions about the research topic influence data collection and analysis as well as appreciate the perspectives of participants for better practice. For instance, Kasturirangan and Williams (2003) interviewed nine Latino survivors of domestic violence with the goal of informing counseling practice. As a result of sharing power with participants, counseling researchers discovered from the participants how ethnicity, gender, and family interact with domestic violence interventions.

ACTIVITY 2.6. Applying the Experience and Theory Formulation Tradition

Suppose you are interested in studying the role of technology in your profession. Consider how each of the traditions discussed in the Experience and Theory Formulation cluster would influence how you might study the role of technology. Compare the traditions and discuss benefits and challenges of each for your topic.

THE MEANING OF SYMBOL AND TEXT: SYMBOLIC INTERACTION, SEMIOTICS, LIFE HISTORY, HERMENEUTICS, AND NARRATOLOGY

The third cluster predominantly involves a meaningful "symbol" to us all: language. Researchers adhering to traditions in this cluster typically examine textual documents for the role of language in shaping attitudes and behaviors. However, some traditions, such as symbolic interaction and biography, also rely on verbal and nonverbal communication as a process for learning about social symbols. After reading about these traditions, complete Activity 2.7 to apply them.

Symbolic Interaction

Reflect on a label with which you identify; it can be a self-imposed label or something placed upon you. Labels might include "Asian American," "female," "alcoholic," "schizophrenic," or "gifted." What meanings do you understand as ascribed to the label? How has the label description changed over time? Has your understanding of that label been influenced predominantly by interactions with others? This brief example gives you some indication of what the tradition of symbolic interaction explores.

Symbolic interaction has been credited with influencing many qualitative research traditions, such as phenomenology and ethnography. It is closely aligned with social constructivism in that the interactions between individual and context are seen to create knowledge and truth. Symbolic interactionists believe that only through social experience can individuals become self-identified. That is, individuals interpret their experiences and identities based on social interactions. They actively interact with their environments, making sense of and responding to symbols, including things like language, signs, and cultural artifacts. Common symbols provide meaning to their interactions (Hays & Newsome, 2008). Language is a particularly important symbol for this approach because how individuals label things or processes greatly influences the way they interact with and interpret them. "We can never get beyond our language ... all the questions we ask and words we use to articulate our understandings are embedded in culture" (McLeod, 2001, p. 56). As an illustration, consider the language clinicians and educators have used to describe significantly lower intelligence over the past century. Language describing these individuals has evolved from earlier terms such as *moron* and *imbecile* to *mental retardation* to an emerging term, *intellectual disability*. With changes in language, changes in meaning and general attitudes toward these individuals have created more sensitive assessment and educational practices.

Symbolic interaction has its roots in social psychology, with George Herbert Mead as one of the most recognized contributors to the approach. Mead believed that the "self" was defined primarily through social and behavioral methods with a need for external examination and validation. Thus, Mead viewed individuals as comprising a unique self that considers social interactions in defining the self. Through the consideration of social context, a shared meaning among individuals arises. This shared meaning leads to social organization and an understanding of various social rules and symbols. In social interactions, we respond to ourselves as others do or expect us to do (Farberman, 1985).

Thus, personal and shared meanings are created within and derived from social interactions. This meaning becomes individuals' phenomenological reality and creates a cycle wherein they act upon things based on their meanings of them, which in turn are based on earlier interactions. Context symbols (i.e., language) influence identity, which influences an understanding of identity in context. Consider Pedro's (2005) study on preservice teachers' reflective practices. Pedro examined five preservice teachers' attitudes regarding reflective practice within the context of a teacher preparation program and discovered nine themes that were categorized as one of three components of symbolic interactionism: acquiring perspective on reflective practice (context symbols), achieving individuality (identity), and situating reflective acts within context (identity in context).

Semiotics

A research tradition closely tied to symbolic interaction is **semiotics**. Codes and symbols regarding a culture or context surround the qualitative researcher. Semiotics is the search, description, and interpretation of these codes (Chandler, 2002). Specifically, qualitative researchers using this tradition attempt to understand how rules guide codes and symbols, such as language.

Similar to a symbolic interaction approach, the relationship between language and other symbols and behavior—and how language influences behavior within a particular context—is salient. Symbolic interaction focuses on how language derives personal and collective meanings. Semiotics focuses more on the rules for code or symbol acquisition itself rather than reflecting on its meaning after it is used. For example, Radford (2003) examined the processes by which mathematics students master algebraic syntax. In the study, Radford discovered that language and gestures were important to move students from presymbolic to symbolic algebraic generalizations. The study described the context for learning, how students engaged with symbols, and how learning was transmitted.

Life History

The **life history** tradition presents an account of a person's life couched in a broader social context, a research tradition that seeks to identify personal meanings individuals give to their social experiences. Often, life histories allow qualitative researchers to "rewrite history" and give voice to marginalized groups. The researcher gathers stories and explores meanings for an individual as well as how the stories fit into a broader social or historical context. Although the term *life history* is used interchangeably with those of *biography, autobiography*, and *oral history*, Creswell (2006) defined each of these

terms in these ways: biography as a life story of an individual from archival documents written by someone other than the individual; autobiography as a life story written directly by an individual; life history as a presentation of an individual's life derived from interviews and personal conversations in which a researcher accounts the individual's life and how it relates to cultural, social, and/or personal themes; and oral history as personal recollections of events and their impact on the individual taken from taped or written works of living or deceased individuals. Many life history methods are categorized as case studies (Creswell, 2003). Although there is great overlap, the distinction we see between life history methods (as making meaning of symbol and text) and the universal tradition (case study) is with intention: Are you using the method to describe a bounded system in which you plan to use various data sources to understand the context and activities of a case? Or are you interested in using the method to reflect solely on the process of meaning making via language or another symbol (e.g., social phenomena)?

This research tradition has been used in various disciplines such as literature, anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology. It was first introduced in sociology by Thomas and Znaniecki (1927), when they used personal letters and autobiographies to examine the relationship between Polish peasants' native culture and community disunion. Life histories gained significance in the 1930s with works of Chicago School researchers (Shaw, 1930, 1938; Sutherland, 1937), which explored criminality via criminal careers, and in the 1940s with works such as Allport and his colleagues' study of the life histories of refugees in Nazi Germany (Allport, Bruner, & Jandorf, 1941). Furthermore, research by theorists such as Levinson (1978) and Erikson (1963), in their efforts to understand developmental stages, demonstrated that this method could be a viable means for understanding psychological processes. Recent examples of the life history method that could be applied to counseling and education include the works of Sommers and Baskin (2006), who collected life histories of 205 methamphetamine abusers to understand violent behavior, and Powell (2006), who interviewed 10 adults who had repeated a grade in elementary school to examine factors related to grade retention.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is an approach that originated from scriptural interpretations and has been applied to other fields, including counseling and education. It is the art of interpreting "sacred" texts, such as religious documents, mythology, history, art, and politics. With hermeneutics, the assumption is that texts are recorded expressions of human experience. Recording expressions of experience may be a subjective representation of lived experience to be used to consider current phenomena. Thus, the text comes alive for the qualitative researcher. It is a form of "cultural inquiry that seeks to construct a historical understanding of the experience and realities of other persons" (McLeod, 2001, p. 26). Practitioners interpret something based on the cultural context they are in as well as the cultural context in which the text was created (Patton, 2002). Thus, the reader must have information not only on the cultural and historical aspects of the text but also on the researcher's life.

Qualitative researchers move back and forth between parts of a text and the whole text to gain understanding while extending the meaning of the text to apply to phenomena in counseling and education. Through this process, both researcher and text

are changed (McLeod, 2001). One historical figure in counseling that has served as the subject of this approach is Sigmund Freud. Bonomi (2005) reviewed a recent text that comments on one of Freud's essays related to self-analysis. Bonomi examined how Freud's original essay sparked commentaries among a new wave of psychoanalysts in the 1960s. The cultural and historical contexts of both when the original essay and text were written are discussed. Also, Bonomi emphasized that Freud's essay and resulting commentary heavily influenced the psychoanalytic community.

Narratology

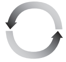
Similar to the hermeneutic and life history approaches, **narratology** or narrative analysis seeks to understand what stories or narratives reveal about an individual. With origins in social sciences and literature, it extends the hermeneutic approach by examining data sources such as interview transcripts, life history and other historical narratives, and creative nonfiction (Patton, 2002). Just as in other approaches in this cluster, recorded data are seen as revealing cultural and personal information about an individual with potential applicability to a larger context. Individuals communicate their sense of their worlds through stories.

There are additional key assumptions underlying narratology. First, individuals speak in narrative form, connecting events over time through stories. In a sense, our stories are not random sentences but constructed in a personally and often culturally meaningful manner. Second, individuals' identities are shaped by the stories they recount and share with others. Finally, narratives change depending on the narrator, audience, and context. What is deemed important often depends on these three dimensions. A narrative thus is not just text but a sequential and causal account of events, people, and processes that expresses how individuals make sense of their worlds (Murray, 2003).

Narratology is concerned with the plot structures, contents, and story purposes we exchange in social interactions. Through narratives, a sense of order can be established to help understand larger phenomena (Polkinghorne, 1988). Stories are thus viewed as primary data that may be examined as a whole, by specific events and processes, or by the ways in which they are communicated (McLeod, 2001).

Narratology may be a natural research tradition for counseling, particularly for those in the field who subscribe to a narrative therapy or a postmodern approach. In narrative therapy counselors search for dominant plot lines, "restorying" opportunities, story linkages, and breaks in sequences (White & Epston, 1990). Similarly, the qualitative researcher examines how individuals tell about their lives through personal narratives. Although themes are important, researchers often focus more on plot structure and process (Murray, 2003). These narratives provide information about the personal meanings of various phenomena to a participant (Hays & Newsome, 2008). Additionally, a narrative may illuminate multiple voices for a current or historical event or process and provide information about the temporal nature of human existence. For instance, Freud's study of his patients' stories greatly influenced the development of psychoanalytic theory (Murray, 2003).

Narratives can be analyzed by various methods, including examining the poetic features of a story, particularly how specific language is used (Gee, 1991); comparing various narratives (Ruth & Öberg, 1996); and focusing on the interpersonal context of a particular narrative and how it might be shaped by a larger context (Mishler, 1997).



ACTIVITY 2.7. Applying the Meaning of Symbol and Text Cluster

Consider a study in your discipline focused on how children's literature has communicated information about gender roles. How might each of the traditions described in this cluster address this research topic?

TABLE 2.3. The Study of Dual-Career Families across Traditions

Research tradition	Focus	Research study example[a]
Cluster 1: The universal tradition		
Case study	Case description and comparison	A researcher is interested in conflict among partners in dual-career families. With "dual-career family" as the case, the researcher studies the individuals, activities, events, and processes of several families (i.e., *collective or multiple case study*) to uncover ways that family and career are balanced for the cases (*instrumental case studies*).
Cluster 2: Experience and theory formulation		
Grounded theory	Theory development	To develop a local theory to describe and explain how conflict impacts dual-career families, a researcher uses an *inductive approach* and *theoretical sampling* to understand sequences, processes, conditions, and actions associated with this phenomenon. The researcher remains close to the data and seeks a *core category* or central idea that unites other constructs and accounts for variation in conflict effects.
Phenomenology	Essence of direct experience	A researcher is interested in interviewing dual-career family members who have directly experienced conflict due to career–family balance concerns. After bracketing his or her experiences with, and assumptions about, conflict, the researcher seeks to fully describe the collective and individual experiences of the phenomenon.
Heuristic inquiry	Integration of personal experience for intense phenomena	Similarly to the phenomenology example above, the researcher interviews dual-career families who have had difficulty balancing career–family roles. However, the researcher integrates personal experience throughout the research process.
Consensual qualitative research	Use of consensus and shared power to describe experience and develop theory	To understand how families negotiate whether both partners will work outside the home, a researcher collaborating closely with participants and team members may arrive at consensus of a local theory that includes in-depth participant experiences of this process.

(cont.)

TABLE 2.3. *(cont.)*

Research tradition	Focus	Research study example[a]
Cluster 3: The meaning of symbol and text		
Semiotics	Search and interpretation of codes; rules for code acquisition	A researcher focuses on rules that guide how dual-career families learn to label themselves as such.
Life history	Individual narratives of social experience	A researcher conducts personal interviews with partners on their process of both deciding to enter the workforce, and then reflects how this relates to the larger society.
Symbolic interaction	Personal and shared meanings of language	A researcher explores the context that provides indicators of meanings in dual-career families (*context symbols*) that lead to label identification, and reflects back to a context to identify personal and shared meanings for dual-career families (*identity in context*).
Hermeneutics	Sacred text applied to present time	To assess the rise of dual-career families, a researcher may analyze several historical political documents and report their influence on past and present-day contexts.
Narratology	Plot structure, content, and purpose of narratives	A researcher examines contemporary books and magazines to explore themes related to attitudes toward dual-career families, reviews themes with participants, and solicits potential "re-storied" personal narratives.
Cluster 4: Cultural expressions of process and experience		
Ethnography	Social, behavioral, and linguistic group patterns and norms	To explore the attitudes and practices of dual-career African American families living in a small community, a researcher builds a relationship over time, engaging in fieldwork that involves participant observation and interviews.
Ethnomethodology	Social order and "everydayness" of behavior	A researcher examines shifts in social patterns after a sudden, nontraditional shift in breadwinner roles for a heterosexual couple.
Autoethnography	Researcher as group member; self-reflexivity in report writing	Using his or her personal experience as a dual-career family member, a researcher explores other group members' attitudes toward resources for dual-career families. The researcher then synthesizes data from self and others to understand a greater social need.
Cluster 5: Research as a change agent		
Participatory action research	Emancipation and transformation; research as a vehicle for specific change	A researcher works with dual-career families who need assistance with child care policies at a particular work setting. He or she critically reflects on his or her power as a researcher, as well as ways in which he or she can equitably include participants in the research process, and works collaboratively with them to collect data to enact policy changes.

[a]A general research topic has been altered based on the research tradition used to orient the design.

CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE: ETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOMETHODOLOGY, AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The fourth cluster, cultural expressions of process and experience, includes the essential feature of a culture-sharing group. That is, examining social and cultural norms is a significant aspect of ethnography, ethnomethodology, and autoethnography. No matter the tradition in this cluster, researchers share the following in common: (1) knowledge and understanding of cultural anthropological terms and concepts, (2) prolonged engagement with the culture studied, (3) manuscripts that are narrative and literary in style about the cultural group, and (4) challenges in fieldwork (e.g., "going native," whereby the researcher is unable to continue the study due to absorption by the culture studied or compromised data; Creswell, 2006). Ethnographic research also shares an acknowledgment that the research process is recursive, demanding flexibility on the part of the researcher and attention to the contextual realities involved in conducting fieldwork. Activity 2.8 provides an opportunity to apply these traditions to a research topic of your choice.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a research paradigm in which the researcher describes and provides interpretations about the culture of a group or system (MacDonald, 2001). A data collection method common to ethnography, **participant observation**, is often utilized by the researcher and involves **prolonged engagement** over a significant period of time with the group studied, in order to describe the process and experience of its culture (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Ethnographic research has its intellectual roots in anthropology (e.g., Bronislaw, Malinowski, M. Mead), whose researchers examined comparative cultures (Pollner & Emerson, 2001). These early scholars were dedicated to ethnographic research that provided a firsthand account of a group's culture, and their research was typically reported in the form of a monograph that resulted from long-term participant observation (MacDonald, 2001). Fieldwork is a critical aspect of ethnography in that the researcher becomes immersed in the context of the group (e.g., daily life activities of members) in order to understand the culture of the group (Stanley, 2001).

Ethnographic research first emerged from the British and French social anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s who studied "exotic" cultural groups that were typically living in colonized regimes (MacDonald, 2001). These early researchers separated themselves from the more traditional research methods of anthropological sciences in that they were interested in studying the cultural norms (e.g., language, behavior) of various cultural groups. Soon after European ethnographic researchers began producing monographs and detailed texts of these cultural groups, ethnography was used in the United States by sociologists at the University of Chicago in what came to be called the culture and personality school of American anthropology (James, 2001). The American school of scholars expanded the focus of ethnography to the "use of childhood and the study of children as the location for the study of broader social values … and a method for observing their inculcation in children through daily life"

(p. 247). As a primary way to examine socialization processes, ethnographies continue to be utilized in the social sciences.

Ethnographic approaches are valuable to the counseling field, in that counselors typically have prolonged engagement with cultural groups and systems, as well as with individuals. Quimby (2006) advocated for the utilization of ethnography for research and practice in mental health. He underscored the utility of ethnographic methods, such as fieldwork and prolonged engagement, as a way to effectively gather, describe, interpret, and understand the cultural identities of informants. In advocating for qualitative approaches such as ethnography, he has focused on clients who are female and of African American heritage as a group that is typically invisible in large, quantitative research methods in mental health. Recognizing the ways in which African American women face challenges in receiving culturally appropriate treatment, in addition to being underrepresented and understudied in research, Quimby asserts that ethnography is a way to rectify their absence in the counseling literature and inform more effective practice. Ultimately, ethnographic research serves as an important research tradition for counseling researchers who seek to conceptualize, build hypotheses, and test outcome data for groups that typically are marginalized in society.

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is similar to ethnography in that both are inductive approaches that examine the lives of their participants in a structured manner, while having a strong sense of respect for the informants in the group studied (Pollner & Emerson, 2001). This research tradition, first used in the 1950s in the sociological sciences, seeks to study social orders and patterns (Heritage, 1994). The focus of study in ethnomethodology is on the informants' perspectives of social order, assessments, and explanations. Similarly to ethnography, researchers are expected to remain close to participants as they gain details of their social and cultural lives.

Ethnomethodologists are most interested in studying the everydayness of social behaviors, and research is usually a product of intentional or unintentional social changes. In order to study everyday "normal" social activities, qualitative researchers may opt to "shake things up" and do something outside a cultural norm to assess how people respond to conditions that differ from what they normally expect. For example, let's say a teacher, instead of standing in front of the classroom to teach, decides to move to the back of the classroom, or maybe even sits among the students. An educator might observe and conduct interviews of students to better understand their perceptions of this change in classroom behavior and structure.

Autoethnography

While ethnography and ethnomethodology both face epistemological challenges in "getting close" to their informants, **autoethnography** resolves this challenge by being a first-person account of events, interactions, and relationships (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Autoethnographers use their own thoughts, feelings, documentation of fieldnotes, and other personal experiences they have in response to their ethnographic examination of a culture as data (Ellis, 1991). For example, one autoethnography docu-

mented the researcher's experience growing up as the child of a mother who lives with a mental illness (Ronai, 1996).

There are two types of autoethnography. The first type, *evocative autoethnography*, involves primarily description of what goes on in an individual's life or social environment and seeks to evoke emotion from the reader. This description is presented in relation to how it is influenced by and influences a culture-sharing group specifically. For more information on evocative ethnography, we refer the reader to Denzin (2006). The second type, *analytic autoethnography*, has been argued to move "beyond" description of social structure to generalize data to larger social phenomena (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson, 2006). Furthermore, Anderson (2006) argued that analytic autoethnography is more aligned with traditional ethnography, yet allows for greater self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, which he argues is more aligned with postmodern paradigms.

Anderson (2006) noted several key features of analytic autoethnography:

- The researcher is a complete member of the social world being researched (i.e., complete member researcher status, CMR), with group membership commonly preceding the research process.
- There is greater attention to the researcher's impact on the research context, and vice versa, to allow for mutual understanding.
- The researcher is visible in the text, accounting for important data.
- The researcher is actively involved with others to ensure representation in findings. (Vryan, 2006, noted that a representative sample of a social group is not a necessity.)
- There is a focus on actively gathering empirical data to understand a broader social phenomenon than that provided by data themselves, connecting biography with social structure.

Autoethnography has its beginnings in the Chicago School (discussed in Chapter 1), when researchers gave greater attention to research in a context—both participants and researchers. Later generations of Chicago School researchers used more explicit self-reflexivity in reporting findings. There came an increasing realization that there was difficulty in "keeping the researcher out" of the process and thus greater autobiographical connection in research reports (Anderson, 2006).

A major benefit of autoethnography is the accessibility of data. Qualitative researchers have a vantage point that allows often for more flexible, unrestricted data (Anderson, 2006; Vryan, 2006). There is an opportunity to switch between being a member and being a researcher, to have an "engaged dialogue" rather than a "detached discovery." This benefit is also a potential drawback if not carefully monitored: a risk of "self-absorbed digression" (Anderson, 2006). Atkinson (2006) describes this critique further:

> There is the elevation of the autobiographical to such a degree that the ethnographer becomes more memorable than the ethnography, the self more absorbing than other social actors. . . . This in turn reflects a wider problem in that the methodological has been transposed onto the plane of personal experience, while the value of sociological or anthropological fieldwork has been translated into a quest for personal fulfillment on the part of the researcher. (pp. 402–403)

Thus, qualitative researchers are cognizant of not using this tradition as a springboard for documenting personal information or simply providing an insider's perspective.

ACTIVITY 2.8. Applying the Cultural Expressions of the Process and Experience Cluster

Select a topic of interest in your profession. Consider how each of the traditions in this cluster would influence how you would study the research topic.

RESEARCH AS A CHANGE AGENT: PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory action research (PAR) is a tradition that focuses on facilitating change in the participants and the researcher in the process of the examination (Nastasi, 1998). Essentially, the goals of PAR are emancipation and transformation, and the researcher is required to critically reflect on the power of research as a change agent (Chiu, 2006). Furthermore, participants and researchers share power, and participants are a part of planning research and implementing its findings.

PAR emerged from the applied anthropological inquiry and is recursive in nature because it seeks to align research with both practice and theory in order to encourage change in a culture and society (Schensul, 1998). Researchers in school psychology have a long tradition of utilizing action research, where the data collection and analysis process drive decisions about practice and intervention (Graham, 1998). PAR involves a collaborative approach to problem solving between the researcher and other key stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, school administrators) to guide interventions and practice with one or more students (Nastasi, Moore, & Varjas, 2004).

Theory, previous research, and collaborative interaction between the researchers and stakeholders provide the foundation for PAR inquiry and guide formulation of research questions. Nastasi and colleagues (2004) describe PAR as using this foundation to generate a culture or context-specific theory that applies to the examination, which will then guide the development of the culture- or context-specific intervention or practice. Ongoing evaluation of the research process is a critical way in which the researcher adapts the intervention or practice in the course of the inquiry, and ultimately provides the field with additional theory that is both general and culture-specific. Theoretical information that is generated, in turn, changes researcher and participants, thus continuing the recursive process of the examination.

Previous to initiating PAR, **critical reflection** is demanded of the researcher. Critical reflection is derived from Friere's (1972) work, which provided a critical analysis of power holders as a way to generate social and systemic change. PAR integrates critical reflection previous to and throughout the research process as a validity check and as a way to ensure that the focus is not merely a discovery of knowledge, but is a collaborative creation of knowledge that will promote systemic change (Chiu, 2006). Thus, critical reflection is an active process that does not merely focus on the outcomes of change

in PAR, but also on the research processes so that readers may learn how to initiate change in a similar manner.

Consider a study of exploring bullying intervention methods for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) adolescents in schools (Varjas et al., 2006). Varjas and her colleagues interviewed 16 community and school service providers to better understand how they respond to LGBT bullying as well as how they perceive school barriers, resources, and existing bullying interventions influencing changes to meet the needs of these youth. For this study, critical reflection not only involved the reflections of the researcher on the informants (third-person reflection) but also incorporated an analysis of the researcher of him- or herself (first-person reflection) in addition to the researcher *and* the informants (second-person reflection). In this example, the critical reflection on all three levels provided a more authentic way to document and promote change during the research process because the reflection was not limited to, and situated in, the researcher alone.

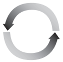
PAR is a useful research tradition to employ in the field of counseling, especially as the social justice movement in counseling continues to grow. Social justice has been named the fifth force in counseling, and it urges counselors to move beyond acquiring multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills to advocacy on behalf of clients (Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). PAR is a research paradigm that traditionally has been utilized more in school psychology research. However, the recent focus on social justice in counseling may urge counseling scholars to consider using PAR as the inquiry of choice when seeking to promote change in a community through the research process.

Stoecker (2005) advises researchers to answer three questions when selecting participatory methods. First, he suggests that the researcher ask: Who is the community? For instance, in a study of homeless individuals who were being displaced by the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, an organization called Project South used participatory research methods, including challenging government policies, to collaboratively change the living situations of these individuals (Project South, 1996). In this study the community was identified as comprising the homeless individuals, the organization and members of Project South, government agencies, and the Atlanta community at large, and the community was the sources of data collection and analysis (e.g., interviews, archival data, community meetings). A second question to ask: Is conflict or cooperation involved in the situation that the researcher is interested in examining? This is an especially important question because the researcher will want to be aware of how conflict or cooperation may shape the research process from collaborative research question design to evaluation. A third question to ask: Is the PAR approach biased in terms of voices that are present and absent in the collaborative process of research? A subset of questions may include attention to who the stakeholders are and which groups hold more or less power in the focus of inquiry.

In the course of the PAR examination, traditional data collection methods are used, such as semistructured interviews, artifacts and archival data, focus groups, and participant observation, among others (Lincoln & Guba, 1995). Nastasi and her colleagues (2004) described using PAR methods to initiate a mental health services plan for schools that met certain required criteria. Six phases were used to create a collaborative and recursive research process: (1) examining existing theory, research, and

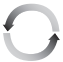
practice (exploring personal theory); (2) learning the culture; (3) forming partnerships; (4) identifying goal or problem; (5) conducting the formative research; and (6) conceptualizing a culture-specific theory or model. They also used a similar approach to an HIV/AIDS prevention project with adolescents in Sri Lanka (Nastasi, Varjas, Sarkar, & Jayasena, 1998), where initial theories and existing information generated data about alcoholism as a stressor for the adolescents, and social stressors (e.g., intimate partner violence, cultural norms of shame) were revealed to impact the transmission of HIV/AIDS. This information was gathered through semistructured interviews with individuals, in addition to community focus group interviews, which were also methods of building collaboration and stakeholder identification for the next stages of the PAR inquiry.

In sum, PAR is a tradition that focuses on a specific setting in counseling and education and seeks to readily apply research findings to real-world problems. To apply these findings, researchers are charged with working actively with participants on solutions. Complete Activity 2.9 to practice applying the PAR tradition.



ACTIVITY 2.9. Applying the PAR Tradition

Select a topic of interest in your profession. Consider how each of the research clusters would influence how you would study the research topic.



ACTIVITY 2.10. Qualitative Article Review

Select an article in your specific profession. Determine which research paradigms and traditions the authors chose. To what degree did they discuss these? How are the paradigms and traditions reflected in the methodology and findings sections of the article?

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT 2.2. Selecting a Research Tradition

Which research traditions(s) resonate(s) most with you? Why? Which seems least appropriate for you? Why? (Remember, your final choice for a research tradition will likely change once you select a proposal topic.)

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Your research orientation is an important foundation in constructing a qualitative study. This orientation is influenced by how you envision scientific pursuit in your profession, which impacts the various research paradigms and traditions you select. The five core philosophies of science are ontology, epistemology, axiology, rhetoric, and methodology. Brainstorming and

addressing questions that correspond to each of these philosophies is an important first step in constructing your research design.

Philosophies of science are related to research paradigms such as positivism, post-positivism, social constructivism, critical theory, feminism, and queer theory. Research paradigms are belief systems upon which you may rely to investigate a research problem. With the increased focus on culture and context in counseling and education research, qualitative researchers are adhering to social constructivist paradigms.

Selecting your research tradition helps solidify the foundation for your research inquiry. There are five major clusters presented in this chapter: (1) the universal tradition (case study); (2) experience and theory formulation (grounded theory, phenomenology, heuristic inquiry, and consensual qualitative research); (3) the meaning of symbol and text (symbolic interaction, semiotics, hermeneutics, narratology, and life history); (4) cultural expressions of process and experience (ethnography, ethnomethodology, and autoethnography); and (5) research as a change agent (PAR).

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Clarke, A. E. (2005). *Situational analysis: Grounded theory after the postmodern turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 191–215). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ponterotto, J. G. (2005). Qualitative research in counseling psychology: A primer on research paradigms and philosophies of science. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 126–136.