

Enhancing Qualitative Research Appraisal: Piloting a Tool to Support Methodological Congruence

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Abstract

In this research report, we introduce a methodological congruence tool (MCT) that addresses the five major qualitative research traditions. Methodological congruence is a "fit" between the researcher's chosen methodology and his/her philosophical perspective. The chosen methodology should be aligned with the research question, data collection and sampling procedures, philosophical perspectives and seminal authors, data analysis, and findings. These elements are contained in the MCT. We share information about its inception, development, and application, and invite our research colleagues to offer critical feedback. It is our hope that qualitative researchers, editorial board members, teachers, and students find this tool helpful and relevant to the application of qualitative research. As the qualitative research community continues to address questions of quality, the MCT may offer an additional layer of transparency that engenders scholarly discussion and furthers ethical writing, production, and publication.

The Methodological Congruence Tool

The Methodological Congruence Tool (MCT)					
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Data Collection/ Sampling</i>	<i>Philosophical Perspective/ Seminal Authors</i>	<i>Data Analysis</i>	<i>Findings/ Discussion</i>
<p>Phenomenology</p> <p>Phenomenology is inductive exploration of the lived experience of a specific phenomenon.</p> <p>Important concepts: Consciousness as intentionality, bracketing, phenomenological reduction or <i>epoché</i>.</p> <p>4 Types:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcendental 2. Hermeneutic 3. Descriptive 4. Interpretive 	<p>What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon</p> <p>What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon</p>	<p>Individuals who have experienced the phenomena</p> <p>Criterion sampling</p> <p>5-15 participants is standard</p>	<p>1. Transcendental/ Empirical (Husserl) Moustakas' (1994) approach focuses on the fullness and essence of the lived experience of the phenomenon.</p> <p>2. Hermeneutic (Heidegger) Max van Manen's (1990) approach includes both description & interpretation as a dynamic and iterative process to understand one's lived experience.</p> <p>3. Descriptive Giorgi (2009) created a modern Husserlian approach to "being-in-the-world" with a focus on describing the phenomenon subjectively/psychologically by the participant and refraining from interpretation.</p> <p>4. Interpretive Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) focused on what happens when the everyday flow of lived experience takes on a particular significance for people.</p>	<p>Distill the substance and experience of the phenomenon to the essence as presented in the collective interview data</p>	<p>Presentation of themes that lead to the essence of the phenomenon.</p> <p>Themes include rich, "thick description" exemplified with direct quotes from participants.</p> <p>Intended to leave the reader with a strong grasp of what it is like to have experienced the stated phenomenon.</p>

<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Research Question</i>	<i>Data Collection/ Sampling</i>	<i>Philosophical Perspective/ Seminal Authors</i>	<i>Data Analysis Coding</i>	<i>Findings/ Discussion</i>

<p>Grounded Theory Inductive development of a model, process, or theory based on a problem or gap in the literature; participants respond to a central phenomenon; memoing is part of reflexivity. Interviews are core elements of this model; Esp. helpful when there are inadequacies to explain the concept; requires that you validate your findings with member checking. Requires that outliers are explored in more depth and incorporated into the analysis.</p>	<p>Grounded Theory asks “process-type” questions about changing experience over time or its stages/phases ; processes involved in change.</p> <p>What is the process of becoming...?</p> <p>How does one...? How is X created?</p> <p>What are the dimensions of X experience?</p>	<p>In grounded theory, theoretical sampling is the process of data collection in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and decides what data to collect next in order to develop a theory.</p> <p>Need homogeneous sample of 20-30 participants</p>	<p>Strauss & Corbin (1990) <i>Descriptive GT</i> based on the reasoning that there is no pre-constructed reality.</p> <p>Recognize bias and maintain objectivity</p> <p>May use pre-set codes</p>	<p><i>Open, Axial, Theoretical codes</i> Thematic development arises from pre-determined codes Constant comparison throughout process meaning codes can change with each round of comparison. Matrices are helpful to keep track of the interplay between conditions and subsequent consequences.</p>	<p>Findings are the interview data/quotes, shared verbatim with explanation as to their significance in advancing the theory.</p> <p>Discussion is a model, method, process, illustration- shared with elaboration & linked to the identified gap in the introduction</p>
			<p>Glaser, 2004 <i>Descriptive GT</i> The code is the central relationship between the data & theory. The category will show itself from the codes</p>	<p><i>Substantive & Theoretical codes</i> Categories generate theory Constant comparison Themes are emergent because codes are assigned, not preset.</p>	<p>Same as above</p>
			<p>Charmaz, 2014 Co-Constructivist & Interpretive</p> <p>Ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist.</p>	<p><i>Initial, Focused, & Theoretical codes</i> Long memos include thoughts, feelings, views, & ideas. Categories form theory and are informed by memos.</p>	<p>As above but find emotion, simple language, rhythms, timing, stories, evocative writing.</p>
			<p>Clarke (2003) post-modernism</p>	<p>Coding occurs in the form of situational maps.</p>	<p>Researcher must “theorize” (v.) rather than build a theory.</p>

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<p>Ethnography To make meaning of a group that shares a culture. Researchers as participant and observer; natural environment; immersive.</p>	<p>Descriptive -group determines the direction of the study. This will be further determined by the access of the researcher to fieldwork.</p> <p>What do you think about...?</p> <p>How do you think people would react to your views on...?</p> <p>What was it like...?</p>	<p>Selection criteria – can researcher establish a participant-observer role?</p> <p>Clarify units of analysis that are accessible, represent a cultural group, and can reasonably be covered by researcher/research team.</p>	<p>Authors</p> <p>John Van Maanen (2011) presents three approaches to ethnography:</p> <p>1. The realist tale is a straightforward, descriptive, and often third person account</p> <p>2. The confessional tale is a more transparent account of the field experience written from the researcher’s perspective.</p> <p>3. The impressionist tale is representational approach to evoke a response from the reader.</p>	<p>Primary emphasis on fieldwork and field notes. Collection may include unobtrusive structured observation, unstructured participation-observation, or grand-tour questions.</p> <p>Interviews may be exploratory, semi-structured, or grand tour interactions with informants. <i>Ethnography includes, “Analyzing data through description of the culture-sharing group; themes about the group”</i></p> <p>Focus is on making meaning/sense of experienced culture. Critical thinking, triangulation, and establishing patterns are some of the expected methods of analysis. May include analysis of supporting archived material.</p>	<p>Study will include a detailed explanation of a singular or limited number of cases.</p> <p>Expect to see thick descriptions & quotations from participants. Presentation of meaning established during experiences within studied culture.</p> <p>Focus on the culture not on the fieldwork; fieldwork is a means to understanding the culture.</p>
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<p>Narrative Narrative methodology emphasizes the description of participants' lives, experiences, and the meaning of those experiences to the participants in their own words Examples of narratives are and not limited to life history, life story, autobiography, biography, and oral history.</p>	<p>The types of research questions are based on the nature of the individual experiences, including the meaning of those experiences to the individual. For example: What is it like for doctoral students who failed the comprehensive exams?</p>	<p>Purposive sampling entails selecting cases that will most benefit the study. A small sample size of 1 to 25 participants. Trusting relationships and collaboration empower participants to tell their stories. Active listening and collaboration is critical.</p>	<p>Riessman, 2008 Structural Analysis, to examine storyline, sequence, timing, coherence, style. The How, or modus operandi of narration Williams, 1984 1. Definition/Extended Narrative 2. Representation: Attention to Form and language: Lengthy interview excerpts. 3. Analysis 4. Attention to Contexts Labov & Waletzky, 1967 1. The abstract summary/ "point of the story." 2. Orientation (time, place, characters, situation). 3. Complicating action (sequence of events or plot, usually with a crisis & turning point). 4. Evaluation (significance of the action). 5. Result or resolution of conflict. 6. Coda (perspective returned back to the present).</p>	<p><u>Thematic Analysis</u>, allows the researcher to focus on the content or context <i>Who, What, When, Where, Why</i> of the narrative, holistically.</p>	<p>The findings should be about the researcher's development of the participant's narrative regarding his/her particular story or experience. Therefore, in the findings, there should be a demonstration of adherence to both the thematic and structural analytical process of the transcript with clarity.</p>
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<p>Case Study Researcher obligation is to understand “this one case” or multiple cases to define and explore an “bounded” system such as a process, activity, event, individual, entity, geographic area, group. Researcher must define concrete boundaries as to who is in the system and who is not. Cases need to demonstrate the variation and/or extreme via interviews, demographics, work status.</p>	<p>A case study’s research questions typically are formed to answer— who, what, where, how, and why; case study is most appropriate for how and why.</p> <p>Research questions lead to propositions.</p>	<p>Theory guides the sample case selected, choosing one/s that are most purposeful.</p> <p>Sampling logic not appropriate.</p> <p>Where design is multi-case, choice of cases is by replication.</p> <p>Detailed case of 1-4 participants; include the “unusual case” or outlier.</p>	<p>Stake, 1995</p>	<p>Categorical aggregation through cross case analysis or direct interpretation of the individual instance. - Patterns - Naturalistic Generalizations</p>	<p>Report format with opening and closing vignette; focus on defining the case; context; key issues, assertions. No separate discussion. Find “epiphanies” and determine the overall meaning of the story.</p>
			<p>Asmussen & Creswell, 1995</p> <p>Social Constructivist Approaches</p>	<p>Facts of Case - Categorical aggregation through cross case analysis or direct interpretation of the individual instance. - Patterns - Categories - Themes - Naturalistic Generalizations</p>	<p>Funnel Approach Context, incident, and identification of issues to be addressed; themes are typical. Separate discussion section; written in a story-like fashion; focused on broader categories in aggregate of themes discovered.</p>
			<p>Yin, 2013 Positivism Pragmatism</p>	<p>Reported by type of case, variations, comparison (linear vs non-linear) cross-case analysis; pattern matching</p>	<p>Multiple methods, linear, comparative, chronological, theory building, suspense, unsequenced.</p>

Discussion
&
Group Reflection



The Methodological Congruence Tool

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The Methodological Congruence Tool

Who we are...

Students

Researchers

Faculty Members

Why a tool?

Reflexivity

Credibility

Validity

Quality

Objectivity

Ethics

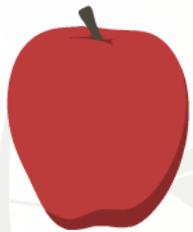
Transparency



*The
Methodological
Congruence
Tool*

Phenomenology

...explores the lived experience of a phenomenon, to uncover its essence...



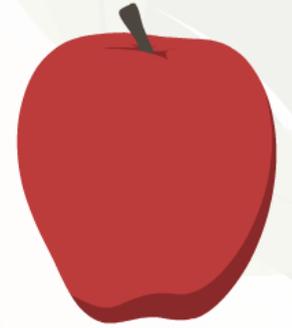
Grounded Theory

*...an inductive approach that uses the
constant comparative method
to analyze data and
to generate a theory*



Ethnography

...involves the in-depth exploration of a culture in which the researcher becomes immersed in the group for extended periods of time.



Narrative

*...the analysis of
an in-depth story
that tells of a
significant event...*



The background features a light beige textured surface with a pattern of green leaves and branches. A prominent red apple is positioned in the upper right corner. The text is centered on a white rectangular area.

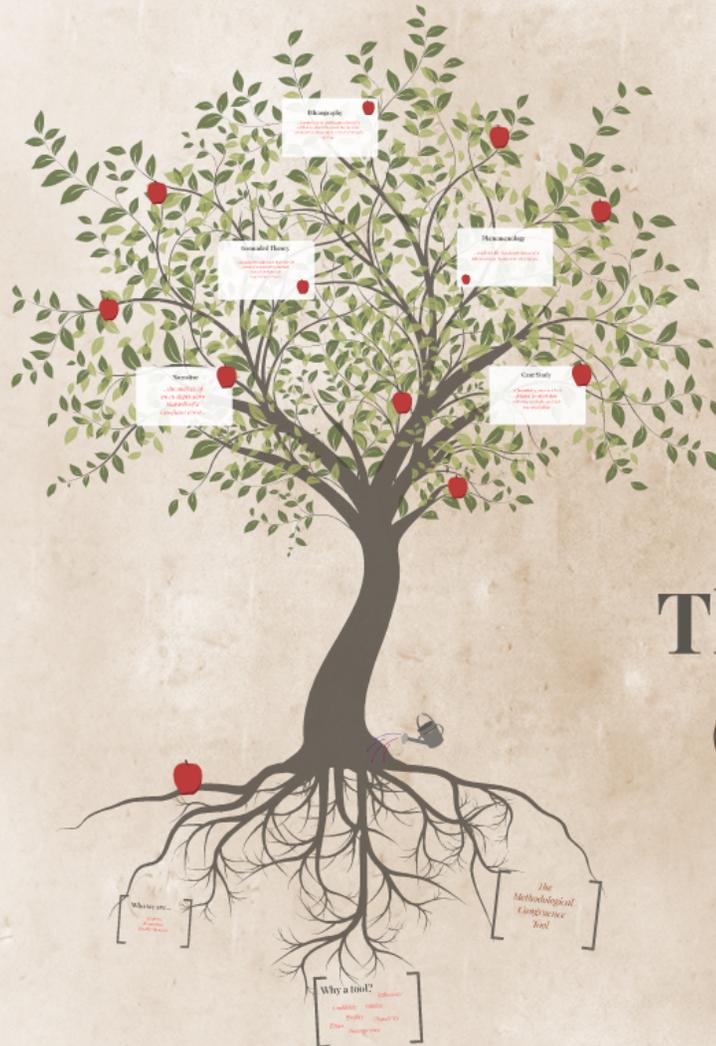
Case Study

*...a bounded system in which
detailed, in-depth data
collection includes multiple
sources of data*

**Discussion
&
Group Reflection**



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