

## Chapter 3: Method (Phenomenological Study)

This workbook is intended to help you to write Chapter 3 of your dissertation proposal. Each part of the workbook contains information that will help you understand what should be included in Chapter 3 of your proposal:

- Critical points to include in each section.
- Issues to consider regarding alignment with other sections of the proposal.
- References to enhance your understanding of what is needed.

When you have read each part of this workbook, write the corresponding section of your draft proposal. Look for the Write Your Dissertation writing prompts throughout the workbook; each one presents a list of everything you should address. Finally, each part of this workbook ends with two tools that will help you self-check your work: a checklist that highlights relevant advice from the *Dissertation Handbook*, and a list of tips provided by the Research Review Board.

When you have completed all parts of this workbook, you can put your work from all the parts together and you should have a finished Chapter 3 of your proposal.

The decision tree in **Table 1** will help you decide whether a phenomenological study is the appropriate design for your research. Examples for the various types of designs are provided so that you can see how other researchers used each design.

**Table 1: Decision tree for choosing the correct qualitative design**

Design	Questions answered	When used	Example
<b>Case Study</b>	How, why, What	Exploring a phenomenon in context, using one or more data collection methods. Describing in depth a case or cases.	Hew, K. F. & Hara, N. (2007) Knowledge sharing in online environments: A qualitative case study. <i>American Society for Information Science and Technology</i> , 58, 2310–2324.
<b>Phenomenology</b>	How do people experience a phenomenon?	Understanding the essence of the lived experiences of a group of people surrounding a phenomenon	Burton, C. R. (2000). Living with stroke: A phenomenological study. <i>Journal of Advanced Nursing</i> , 32, 301–309.

(Cont.)

**Table 1: Decision tree for choosing the correct qualitative design (cont.)**

Design	Questions answered	When used	Example
Grounded theory	What is the theory that explains the common experiences or behaviors of a group of people?	Explaining why people behave in a certain manner	Harley, A. E., Buckworth, J., Katz, M., Willis, S., Odoms-Young, A., & Heaney, C. A. (2009). Developing long-term physical activity participation: A grounded theory study with African American women. <i>Health Education and Behavior</i> ; 36, 97-112.
Ethnographic study	What are the shared patterns of a culture or a group?	Describing a culture sharing group	Baillie J., & Lankshear, A. (2015). Patient and family perspectives on peritoneal dialysis at home: Findings from an ethnographic study. <i>Journal of Clinical Nursing</i> , 24, 222-234.
Narrative	What are the stories of the individual experiences of a specific individual?	Exploring the life of an individual or individuals	Patsiopoulou, A. T.; & Buchanan, M. J. (2011). The practice of self-compassion in counseling: A narrative inquiry. <i>Professional Psychology: Research and Practice</i> , 42, 301-307.

The decision tree in **Table 2** will help to decide which type of phenomenological approach is appropriate for your study. The major writers for each type of study are provided so that you can learn more about these approaches.

**Table 2: Decision tree for choosing the right phenomenological study**

Type of case study	Orientation	How used	Major writers
Hermeneutic	Oriented to lived experiences and to interpreting the texts of those experiences.	Used to show the dynamic interplay of research activities.  Focuses on interpretation.	Martin Heidegger Hans Georg-Gadamer Paul Ricoeur

(Cont.)

**Table 2: Decision tree for choosing the right case study (cont.)**

Type of case study	Orientation	How used	Major writers
Transcendental	<p>Explains the essence of the experience.</p> <p>Based on reduction and constitution of meaning.</p>	<p>Investigates the way knowledge comes into being.</p> <p>Clarifies the assumptions upon which all human understanding is grounded.</p> <p>Also referred to as epistemological phenomenology.</p>	<p>Edmund Husserl Clark Moustakas Amedeo Giorgi</p>
Ethical	<p>Not focused on the meaning of being.</p> <p>Focused on the meaning of what is separate from being—the infinite.</p>	<p>Focuses on the vulnerability of the other as a responsibility.</p> <p>Came about because of the need to understand freedom of choice, consequences, and responsibility</p>	<p>Emmanuel Levinas</p>
Existential	<p>Focused on how the being of things show themselves to us.</p> <p>Oriented to the need to be in tune with the ways things are in the world.</p>	<p>Asks how can we allow the essence of the experience to show itself clearly.</p> <p>Also referred to as ontological phenomenology.</p>	<p>Martin Heidegger-</p>
Linguistic	<p>Meaning is derived from linguistics.</p> <p>Resides in language and the text rather than the subject, consciousness, or even lived experience.</p>	<p>Characterized by the fact that the nature of text has its own autonomy and is not dependent on the subject or on external references.</p> <p>Uses deconstruction to show the variance of various entities.</p>	<p>Jacques Derrida</p>

# Method

*(This is the main heading for this chapter)*

## Introduce the Method section.

*(Do not use a heading for this section.)*

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Your introduction to the Method section sets the stage for this chapter. Start by restating the purpose of your study and then present what will be in Chapter 3.

#### **Critical Points to Address for This Section**



Start by restating the purpose of your study. This statement is the same as the purpose statement presented in Chapter 1. Briefly preview the focus of Chapter 3, identify the major topics to be covered in the chapter, and end with a transitional sentence to the Description and Justification for Research Method and Description and Justification for Research Design sections.

#### **Considerations for Alignment**



- Purpose statement must be written exactly the same as it was in Chapter 1.
- Introduction should align with subsequent sections of this chapter.

#### **Write Your Dissertation**



In your dissertation template, write your introduction section, addressing each of the following points:

- Restate the purpose statement.
- Preview what is in Chapter 3.
- Identify major topics covered in this chapter.
- End with a transitional sentence to the next section.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Introduction

- \_\_\_\_\_ Begins with the purpose of the chapter, how it fits into the dissertation, and the organization of the chapter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes the method of inquiry used (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed method, meta-analysis, program evaluation).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes the specific research methodology chosen and how it derives logically from the statement of problem and the research questions.

## Methodology Selected

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

**Describe and justify your research method.**

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Chapter 7 in the *Field Guide*, particularly Section 7.5

The phenomenological design is a qualitative method. Qualitative methods are used to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of people regarding a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Yin (2010) described qualitative research as collecting data from a variety of resources, evaluating the data, analyzing evaluations to produce findings, and presenting the findings.

### **Critical Points to Address for This Section**



**Description of method.** In this section, describe in detail why a qualitative study is the best way to do your research. Do not simply provide a tutorial regarding qualitative research. Instead, show the reader that you understand what the qualitative method is and when to use this approach. Be sure to provide citations.

**Justification of method.** Begin by describing the problem you are exploring and then explain how the problem indicates the need for a qualitative approach in order to understand a phenomenon. Explain why a qualitative study is the most appropriate method. Explain why a quantitative approach is not appropriate for your research.

### **Considerations for Alignment**



- Qualitative method must align with the purpose of your study.
- Qualitative method must align with the problem statement.
- Qualitative method must align with the research questions.
- Aligns with description in Chapter 1.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Klenke, K. (2008). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership*. Cambridge, MA: Elsevier.
- Latham, J. (2010). *Frameworks to create the organization you really want!* Retrieved from [http://www.drjohnlatham.com/Overall\\_Approach.html](http://www.drjohnlatham.com/Overall_Approach.html)
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2009). *Practical research: Planning and design* (9th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson/Prentice-Hall.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your draft dissertation, write a few paragraphs that describe and justify the method to be used, addressing each of the following points:

- Describe the problem.
- Explain how the problem indicates the need for a qualitative approach.
- Explain why a qualitative study is most appropriate.
- Explain why a quantitative approach is not appropriate.
- Be sure to cite references.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Describe and justify your research design.

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Sections 7.2 to 7.4 in the *Field Guide*

Chapter 12 introduction in the *Field Guide*

Figure 8.1 in the *Field Guide*

The basic purpose of phenomenology is to grasp the very nature of a phenomenon as people have lived and experienced it (van Manen, 1990). In order to do this, the phenomenological researcher must identify the phenomenon. This could be the phenomenon of being bullied, undergoing a specific surgical procedure, or living through a life event, such as a hurricane. The researcher collects data from persons who have experienced a phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of that experience for everyone who lived it. The goal is to understand what they experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

As noted in **Table 2**, there are various ways of understanding an experience. Phenomenology started with Edmund Husserl, who believed that understanding came from the ideal essential structures of consciousness. Husserl introduced the method of phenomenological reduction to eliminate the influence of any external factors. Husserl believed that scientific knowledge starts with an unbiased description of the phenomenon. He believed that the researcher could set aside prior scientific assumptions in order to get to the essence of the phenomenon itself. The idea is to understand the phenomenon as it is lived, absent any preconceived ideas.

Husserl used two procedures, epoche and bracketing, to achieve this state of unbiased understanding. One method is to suspend previous beliefs and put them out of play through a process called bracketing. Another is epoche, in which the researcher approaches the world exactly as it is encountered. The researcher does not reflect on the meaning of the phenomenon, but simply on the living of that phenomenon. To accomplish this, Husserl believed that the researcher must suspend any beliefs regarding the existence of what the experience is in order to understand the essence of the experience. For this to be successful, the researcher must recollect and then suspend his own experiences and enter into the lived world of others in order to understand their meaning of the world.

Besides bracketing and epoche, Husserl also introduced the concept of eidetic reduction. Through this method, the researcher can delineate the invariant characteristics of the phenomenon and clarify the meaning and organization of the subject. This is a process in which an instance of a phenomenon is reduced to its simplest form. Husserl (1913) developed an approach called free imaginative variation. In this approach, the researcher starts with a concrete example of the phenomenon he wishes to understand and then varies every possible way to distinguish its essential features from those that might be incidental or accidental to it.

The process of eidetic reduction, or free imaginative variation, was reduced to three stages: exemplary intuition, imaginative repetition, and synthesis. Exemplary intuition starts with the researcher thinking about an object similar to the object or phenomenon being researched. The actual object is unimportant as long as it is similar to the one being studied. This instance provides a model to shape new images of the phenomenon called imaginative repetition. For example, let's say that you are studying the phenomenon of reading. You are currently reading this text, so you begin thinking of all the different ways people read. You can read single letters, you can read billboards, you can read newspapers. The researcher tries to think of every instance of the concept of reading in order to look at the range of possibilities and understand the range of variants. The range of possibilities is limitless, but at some point the researcher must stop, because the essence of the phenomenon of reading is present in all these variations. When doing this, it is not acceptable to go in a different direction. For example when you are trying to understand the essence of reading, you would not change to understanding pictures, or even to understanding sign language or lip reading, because these are different variants of the phenomenon being studied. In the final stage of this process, the common instances of the phenomenon are integrated into one reality.

The problem with imaginative variation is that it leads to a paradox in that we are expected to know something about the phenomenon and consider all possibilities of the phenomenon, but we are also supposed to suspend all prior beliefs about the phenomenon.

Husserl's student, Martin Heidegger, separated from Husserl in that he did not believe that it is possible to suspend or bracket our preconceived ideas regarding a phenomenon. Whereas Husserl attempted to use phenomenology as an approach to establishing the basic concepts underlying scientific and philosophic disciplines, and to develop a scientific approach to philosophy, Heidegger used phenomenology as strictly ontological, and focused on the existential issues of existence, being in the world, authenticity, and death.

The emergence of modern phenomenological research was led by Amedeo Giorgi and the Duquesne Circle as well as Clark Moustakas. Giorgi developed varied methods, described procedures used, and refined his understanding of the essence of lived experiences. He also addressed issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research. Giorgi believed it was important to be reflexive and to be clear in methodological approaches.

A book on hermeneutical phenomenology was written by Max van Manen (1990). In the book, van Manen described phenomenological research as oriented toward lived experience and interpreting the texts of life (hermeneutics). Van Manen approached phenomenology as a dynamic interplay among six research activities. At first, the researcher turns to the phenomenon and reflects on the essential themes that constitute the nature of the lived experience. The researcher then writes a description of the phenomenon. For van Manen, phenomenology is not simply a description, but is also an interpretive process in which the researcher interprets and mediates between different meanings of the experience. For Moustakas (1994) and his transcendental phenomenology, the research is focused less on interpretations and more on a description of the experiences of the participants.

Moustakas focused on Husserl's concept of epoche and bracketing in order to get a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under investigation. Moustakas did admit that a state of suspended belief is rarely perfectly achieved. Moustakas drew heavily on the Duquesne studies in *Phenomenological Psychology* (Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedure of Adrian Van Kaam (1955) and P. F. Colaizzi (1978). These procedures consisted of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out experiences, and collecting data from several persons who had experienced the phenomenon. The data are then analyzed through reduction to significant statements and quotes that are combined into themes. The researcher then develops a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what they experienced), a structural description of the experiences (how they experienced it), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey the overall essence of the experience.

The major procedural steps in phenomenological research are

- A determination that the research problem is best approached through phenomenology. The type of problem best suited for phenomenology is one in which it is important to understand several people's shared experience of a phenomenon in order to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.
- Determining a phenomenon of interest.
- Recognizing and specifying the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. For example, you could use the approach of Husserl and focus on the essence of the experience through a textural analysis while suspending all prior belief. Or you could use a transcendental approach by bracketing beliefs and reducing experiences into textural and structural descriptions of the lived experience.



- Data must be collected from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Donald Polkinghorne (1989) recommended interviewing 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon. Other data such as observations, journals, art, or music can also be used.

According to Moustakas (1994), participants are asked two general questions: “What have you experience in terms of the phenomenon?” and “What situations have typically influenced or affected your experience of the phenomenon?”

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



**Description of the design.** In this section, describe the phenomenological design and its uses. First, describe the phenomenological design and its uses and how the phenomenological study differs from other qualitative designs. Then focus on the type of phenomenological approach you intend to take. Describe the approach you intend to use. Then explain how this approach differs from other phenomenological approaches. Further, explain why this approach and design are appropriate to your research as opposed to other types of phenomenological approaches. Again, this is not to be a tutorial on phenomenological study design. Instead, your writing should show evidence that you understand the design. Be sure to cite references. Avoid textbooks and, instead, cite scholarly authors such as Moustakas, Giorgi, van Manen, Husserl, and Heidegger.

**Justification of the design.** Describe the phenomenon being studied and discuss why exploring the lived experiences of people who have experienced the phenomenon is the best approach to use. Explain how your research addresses the tenets of phenomenological research. Explain how your research aligns with the concept of phenomenological research. What questions are you addressing with your research, and how do those questions align with the basic questions posited by Moustakas, outlined above? In addition, explain why other qualitative designs would not be appropriate for your study.

Remember it is not enough to simply address these issues with a laundry list of facts. This section should be assembled into a logically flowing narrative of your research design and justification for the phenomenological research study.

### Considerations for Alignment



- Align your design with the problem being explored.
- Show how your design is congruent with the purpose of your study.
- Aligns with description in Chapter 1.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. Vale & M. King (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48–71). New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time* (R. MacQuarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology* (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- LeVasseur, J. J. (2003). The problem with bracketing in phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 31, 408–420.
- Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14, 726–735.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Natanson, M. (Ed.). (1973). *Phenomenology and the social sciences*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41–60). New York, NY: Plenum Press.
- Van Kaam, A. (1966). *Existential foundations of psychology*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience*. New York, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 167–177.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write your description and justification for your design, addressing each of the following points:

- Explain the phenomenon and why your approach to phenomenological research is the best approach for exploring it.
- Explain how your study addresses the essence of the experience.
- Explain how the approach you are using is addressed.
- Explain how the phenomenological approach aligns with the problem and purpose of your study.
- Why are other qualitative designs not appropriate?
- Why are other approaches to phenomenological research not appropriate?

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Address your research questions.

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Chapter 5 in the *Field Guide*

Your research questions are the questions you will answer with your research. They must align with your problem statement and your purpose statement. You should never include questions that were not addressed in the problem and purpose statements.

In qualitative research, there is generally an overarching or central question followed by sub-questions. Remember that Moustakas mentioned there are two basic questions in phenomenological research: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What situations have typically influenced or affected your experience of the phenomenon? In addition, ask your participants how they experienced the phenomenon. You want to know what they felt, what they thought, and what the essence of the experience was for them. Generally, research questions in phenomenological research start with questions like the following: “What are the lived experiences of people regarding a specific phenomenon?”, “What situations influenced the experience of the phenomenon?”, or “What was the essence of the experience for the people who lived the phenomenon?”

## Critical Points to Address for This Section



Address your research questions. These questions must be the same as those you presented in Chapter 1. Remember that your research questions are not your interview questions. They are the questions that will be answered through your research. Also include a narrative to show how your research questions align with the problem and purpose of your study.

## Considerations for Alignment



- Research questions must align with the methodology being used.
- Research questions must align with the problem by addressing the problem.
- Research questions must align with the purpose.
- Do not include questions that are not mentioned in the purpose of your study.
- Research questions must align with those presented in Chapter 1.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write one to two paragraphs that introduce your research questions and show how they align with the problem and purpose. Then write the overarching question and the subquestions. Be sure to address each of these points:

- In a short narrative, introduce the research questions and explain how they align with the problem and purpose of the study.
- Address your overarching research question.
- Address your subquestions.

*Remember: This content must be written exactly as it was in Chapter 1.*

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Address your role as the researcher.

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.7 in the *Field Guide*

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes part of the research, because the researcher engages with the respondents through various methods of data collection and analysis. As a

result, the researcher's pre-conceived biases or assumptions could easily influence data collection or data analysis. This has always been a criticism of qualitative research. To mitigate this concern, the qualitative researcher uses methods such as bracketing to try to ensure that his or her biases will not interfere with the research.

According to Tufford and Neuman (2010), there is much debate over the definition of bracketing and even when it should be used. Tufford and Neuman suggested several approaches to bracketing. One approach is to keep notes during data collection and data analysis so that the researcher can examine and reflect on his engagement with the data. Another method of bracketing is to conduct an interview with an outside source or colleague to allow the researcher to uncover and bring to awareness any biases or pre-conceived assumptions. A third approach is to keep a reflexive journal. The journal is started before the actual data collection begins.

Tufford and Newman suggested that the researcher should explain the reasons for undertaking the research, any assumptions regarding the research, the researcher's own value system, and any potential role conflict with the study participants. Moustakas (1994) also discussed the concept of bracketing and epoche, as did Husserl. Heidegger did not believe that it is possible to actually suspend our beliefs. However, in order to provide sound scientific research, it is important for the researcher to be totally transparent in his beliefs, and to use eidetic reduction to get at the heart of what we believe regarding a phenomenon.

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



In this section, it is important to be transparent. You must describe your background and any potential issues it may have on your research. You must also discuss how you will mitigate any potential problems that you as the researcher might bring to the research. Discuss bracketing and keeping a reflexive journal, as well as epoche and eidetic reduction.

Also consider how you as the researcher might be perceived by your participants, and discuss methods to address or at least mitigate any problems. For example, if you are a male doing research on the male experience in a traditionally female role, such as being a stay-at-home parent, your sex might influence how your male participants respond to your questions.

### Considerations for Alignment



- Your role as the researcher should align with your design.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



Chenail, R. J. (2011). Interviewing the investigator: Strategies for addressing instrumentation and researcher bias concerns in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 16*, 255–262. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol16/iss1/16>

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work, 11*(1) 80–96.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write your section on your role as the researcher and how you will mitigate any bias. Be sure to address each of these points:

- Describe your role as the researcher in data collection.
- Explain the potential for researcher bias and ways to mitigate bias.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Write Your Dissertation



Now combine the material you wrote in this part of the workbook on research method and design, research questions, and your role as the researcher into one succinct section. Address all of the following points:

### Methodology Selected

#### A. Research method

- Detailed description of qualitative research with references
- Justification for research method
- Why other methods are not appropriate
- Alignment of method with problem and purpose

#### B. Research design

- Detailed description of phenomenological research, with particular focus on the approach you are using with references
- Justification for research design, both the phenomenology and the approach used
- Why other designs are not appropriate
- Alignment of design with problem and purpose

(Cont.)

## Write Your Dissertation (cont.)



### Methodology Selected

#### C. Research questions

- Short narrative to introduce the research questions and explain how they align with the problem and purpose of the study
- Overarching research question
- Subquestions

#### D. Role of the researcher

*Remember: Be sure to use references. Avoid textbooks. Use the qualitative researchers familiar with this type of study (e.g., Yin).*

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Methodology

- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes which qualitative methodology will be used.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Justifies choice of methodology using major and foundational sources.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Explains why other possible choices would be less effective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes specific research questions and subquestions (where appropriate) that are
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Clear and succinct.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Congruent with the statement of problem.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Answerable.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Few in number.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly stated.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Open-ended (*not* yes/no questions).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes the role of the researcher in the data collection procedure.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Addresses the potential impact and minimization of researcher bias through methodological approaches.

## TIPS

### from the Research Review Board

Describe how and justify why the research method and design is appropriate for your problem, purpose, and research questions.

## Study Participants

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

### Describe the population in your study.

#### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Chapter 10 in the *Field Guide*

The population in your study includes the people you plan to interview who have experienced the phenomenon you are researching. There are several things to consider when selecting your population. First, the population must align with your problem and with your purpose. For example, if your study is about the bullying experienced by Muslim immigrants, you would want to use people who are Muslim and who have experienced bullying. Because the Muslim population is a fairly large population, you might want to limit your study to Muslims who have experienced bullying in a work environment or in a school environment. You might also want to use a population that is specific to an industry or a school to narrow the population even further.

The next big issue is access to your population. It might be difficult to get access to Muslim immigrants unless you are from the same cultural background or know someone who can act as a gatekeeper to help you to gain access to this population. Similarly, if your population belongs to, for example, employees at a specific company, you will need to get permission from the company to solicit them for your study.

#### **Critical Points to Address for This Section**



In this section, clearly describe the population you will be using for your research. The population used must align with your problem, purpose, and research questions. Include a description of the demographics of the population so that the reader will be able to determine whether the sample is representative of the actual population. For example, get an idea of how many Muslims immigrants reside in the specific geographic location you are using. Also include such demographics as gender, age, education, and socioeconomic status, as well as their country of origin and how long they have been in the United States. In addition, explain how you will access this population. If you plan to obtain participants from a specific organization, you must obtain permission from that organization prior to soliciting your sample. This signed permission must be in an appendix.



## Considerations for Alignment



- Population must align with the specific problem presented in Chapter 1.
- Population must align with the purpose statement.
- Population must align with your research questions.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Maxwell, J. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. (2014). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write the section on your population, addressing each of these points:

- Who is the population?
- What geographic area are they in?
- What are the demographics of the population?
- Are they within a specific group or organization?
- How does the population align with the problem, purpose, and research questions of your study?
- How will you access this population?
- Is permission needed to access the population? If so, the signed permission must be in an appendix.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Describe and justify sampling in your study.

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Chapter 10 in the *Field Guide*

Section 12.4 in the *Field Guide*

**Sampling technique.** Generally, in qualitative research your sampling technique will be non-random purposive sampling because you will be choosing specific people for your sample who meet the criteria for your study. However, there are other techniques available. Creswell (2013) listed 16 types of sampling techniques (p. 158). One approach is snowball sampling, which is often used with the population you are researching is not readily available. In this approach, you ask people already in your sample to identify others who might fit your criteria. Consider and discuss your sampling approach, why it is appropriate, and the pros and cons of using it. The approach you use depends on the purpose of your study and the population from which you draw your sample.

**Sample criteria.** It is important to clearly describe the criteria you will use to define your sample. These criteria must be in alignment with your problem, purpose statement, and research questions. For example, if you decide to do a study on the phenomenon of being treated for cancer, you would want to have participants who have been diagnosed and treated for cancer. You might also want to delineate your sample further by choosing only participants who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and were treated with chemotherapy, surgery, or radiation. You might even decide to limit the study to only females who were in Stage 3 or 4 when diagnosed. The idea is to clearly define the sample based on your research problem and purpose. Be certain that the information you provide regarding the sample is aligned with the description of your sample in Chapter 1.

**Sample size.** Identify the anticipated sample size for each group of participants. Polkinghorne recommended interviewing 4 to 25 participants for phenomenological research. Wertz (2005) indicated that the number of participants is dependent on the research problem. For example, if you want to get an in-depth understanding of one person's experience, then one person might be enough. However, if you want to understand the collective experiences of people who have lived a phenomenon, then more people would be required.

In qualitative research, we continue to collect data until data saturation has occurred. Stebbins (2001) described the conventional approach for determining sample size, theoretical saturation, as the point at which no new information is produced from additional cases. There are various views on how many cases are needed to achieve data saturation. Some researchers indicate that it can be as few as 3 to 5 cases, while others believe that case studies require as many as 30 respondents. The number of respondents for data saturation is dependent on how homogeneous the sample is and on the qualitative design. The more homogeneous the sample, the fewer cases needed for data saturation. The more heterogeneous the sample, the more cases needed for data saturation. You must indicate how many participants you will have in your sample and justify this number. If you have more than one group, indicate how many participants are in each group.

**Accessing your sample.** When determining your sample, consider how you will access the sample. Some populations are closed to outsiders, so gaining entrance may be difficult. At times, it might be necessary to find a gatekeeper who can gain entry for you. You can also access sample populations through conferences, list serves, or even by advertising on social media or through the newspaper. Snowball sampling is often used when trying to access a population that is difficult to reach through conventional channels. If you want to access a sample at a specific place of employment, you will need to get permission to solicit participants for your research.

**Soliciting participants.** You must also consider how you will solicit people to be part of your study. Will you send out an email? Will you make telephone calls? Will you set up a table at a conference or at some other site? It is important to make certain that people do not feel coerced to be part of your study and that their participation is confidential. Therefore, you would not set up a table at a conference and interview people who stop by. Instead, you would hand out information about your study and invite potential participants to contact you.

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



Identify your sampling technique. Explain clearly what approach to sampling you will use so that the reader can understand exactly what you will be doing. Define the parameters of your sample carefully. Your approach will be nonrandom because you will take anyone who volunteers to be part of your study and fits the criteria. It will be purposive because you have defined clear criteria for your sample.

Once you have selected your sampling technique, you must justify why it is appropriate for your study. Base your justification on the purpose of your study and on the population and its availability to you. Ensure that the population chosen for your research aligns with your study purpose. Make certain that the people you sample have experienced the same phenomenon. For example, if your phenomenon is a mass shooting and you are trying to understand the phenomenon from the lived experiences of those who survived, you would interview only people who had lived through that shooting. You would not include first responders or family members, because their experiences would be very different.

Be sure to describe your sample fully. This description allows the reader to determine whether the sample is representative of the population. It also allows the reader to determine whether the sample is similar to another population, which might make the results more transferable. Also, discuss how your sample is representative of the population being studied.

Next, discuss sample size. Always state an approximate number of people who will be interviewed and then discuss the concept of data saturation. Justify the number you have chosen. Do not just choose a random number. Remember the factors that might determine when data saturation has occurred, such as the type of design and the homogeneity of the population and sample.

Discuss how you will access your population. If permissions are needed, provide them in an appendix.

Finally, describe how you will solicit participation for your study from the population chosen. This description should be very detailed so that the reader can understand exactly how you plan to solicit people. Show that you have considered issues of confidentiality and free choice.

## Considerations for Alignment



- Sample must align with the population.
- Sample must align with the specific problem of the research.
- Sample must align with the purpose of the research.
- Sample must align with the research questions.
- Sample must align with information provided in Chapter 1.
- Sample must align with the population.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Carlsen, B., & Glenton, C. (2011). What about *N*? A methodological study of sample-size reporting in focus group studies. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 11(1), 26.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd. ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marshall, B., Cardon, P., Poddar, A., & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does sample size matter in qualitative research: A review of qualitative interviews in IS research. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 54(1), 11–22. Retrieved from <http://iacis.org/jcis/articles/JCIS54-2.pdf>
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Reilly, M., & Parker, N. (2013). Unsatisfactory saturation: A critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 13, 190–197.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2001). *Exploratory research in the social sciences* [Kindle edition]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 167–177.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, please write the section on study participants, addressing each of these points:

- Describe the general population and specific population.
- Describe your sampling method.
- Identify the criteria for selecting respondents.
- Describe the appropriateness of the sampling method based on the population and the purpose of your study.
- Describe how the characteristics of the sample align with the general population.
- Describe how you will access your sample.

(Cont.)

## Write Your Dissertation (cont.)



- Describe how you will recruit participants.
- Discuss sample size and data saturation.
- Justify the sample size.
- Discuss issues of transferability.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Population and Sampling

- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes and justifies the context (including site) for the study.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly defines both the general study population and the specific population.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrates (and documents) the ability to access the population.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Describes and justifies the sampling approach.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Describes how the characteristics of the sample population align with the general population.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Discusses how the sample selection impacts the generalizability of the study.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Identifies strategies for recruiting participants.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Specifies appropriate criteria for selecting participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Addresses the relationship between the researcher and the participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Justifies the number of participants.



### from the Research Review Board

- Clearly describes the population and how it is being accessed.
- Clearly identify your sampling approach.
- Justify that your sample size is sufficient to achieve data saturation.

# Data Collection

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

## ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.6 in the *Field Guide*

Section 12.7 in the *Field Guide*

**Approaches to data collection.** There are various approaches to data collection. The most common approach is the interview. If you are conducting interviews, they can be done in person, via email, Skype, telephone, or any other method that allows participants to answer your questions. Carefully consider the best approach to collecting data and how you will collect it. Often distance is a problem, so face-to-face interviews are not always possible, although this is the preferred method of data collection.

When you do interviews, observe the behavior of your participants carefully and keep field notes regarding their behavior. Body language and facial expressions can sometimes be more revealing than the actual words spoken.

**Type of data collected.** Because you are exploring a phenomenon, the primary type of data you collect will be the responses of your participants. In addition, part of the data you can collect in phenomenological research consists of observations, journals, poetry, music, and pictures. You may even decide to collect artifacts from the phenomenon. Your field notes are also part of the data. These notes provide additional information that helps put interview responses into context. Overall, the idea is to get as complete an understanding of the essence of the lived experience as possible.

**The research protocol.** Giorgi believed that it was important to keep an account of the research method in order to give the research validity and reliability. This account is known as a research protocol or script, and it is included in an appendix. The protocol can increase the reliability of the research because it serves as a guide to ensure that the researcher will use the same data collection activities over a number of cases. The phenomenological protocol serves as a procedural guide for data collection, coding, and analyzing interview sessions. Giorgi believed that the phenomenological researcher needs to be reflexive in her approach in order to understand the essence of the experience. Keeping a research journal or personal journal can help with reflexivity.

Your interview questions should be written so that responses to them will answer your research questions. Be careful when writing interview questions:

- Do not ask yes/no questions. They add little value in terms of really exploring the perceptions of your participants.
- Make certain your questions are clear and ask what you intend.
- Do not use jargon or slang.
- Ensure that your questions are open-ended to allow your participants to share their experiences.

In addition to the interview questions, you might also write probing questions to elicit more information, or you might simply be aware that you may need to probe further to fully understand what is being said.

It may also be important to include some demographic questions so you can describe your sample. When you ask personal questions such as age or salary, be careful that you ask for ranges rather than specific numbers.

Include in your research protocol or script your opening and closing remarks to your participants. Generally, start by thanking your participant for taking the time to be part of the study. In addition, explain the purpose of the study and remind them that they are free to stop the interview at any time. At the close of the interview, again thank them for their participation. You might ask them if they have any other insights that were not covered in your questions.

**Audit trail.** The audit trail provides a procedure that allows the researcher to outline decisions made throughout the research process and to provide rationale for those decisions. It is important to maintain a chain of evidence that will allow the reader to understand how data were collected and analyzed and the rationale for any deviation. Providing an audit trail increases the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research. The audit trail consists of comprehensive notes related to the contextual background of the data and the rationale for all methodological decisions.

**Pilot study/field test.** The pilot study is generally used to evaluate the research questions and identify any potential researcher bias. Generally, the pilot study is conducted with a small subgroup drawn from the sample—three to five people is usually sufficient. The pilot study is conducted in exactly the same manner as the interview for the research, including getting informed consent from the participants. However, in addition to the interview questions, the researcher will also ask pilot study participants if they understood the questions, if any questions should be added, or if any questions should be deleted. Besides focusing on the interview questions, the pilot study gives the researcher the opportunity to find out how long the interview will last, whether the interviews will flow logically and coherently, whether any questions need to be changed, and to determine the type of data that will be obtained from the questions. The pilot study provides face validity for the interview questions.

The field test is completed with two to three experts in the field of phenomenological research. The field test is used to solicit the opinions of these experts regarding the quality of the questions. Are they phenomenological in nature? Are they aligned with the research questions and the purpose of the research?

## Critical Points to Address for This Section



**Data collection methods.** It is important to carefully describe exactly how you will collect data and to give the rationale for your data collection methods. Writing out a step-by-step approach to data collection may help you solidify your approach. The reader should be able to replicate your research by following your data collection steps. If you conduct interviews, be sure to record them. This must be clearly spelled out in this section, and must also be noted on the informed consent form.

It is also important to consider how you will keep track of your data. Generally interviews are transcribed and then returned to the participants for review. This process is called member checking and lends more credibility to your results. In this section explain whether and how you will transcribe the data. In addition, if you are doing member checking, explain how it will be done.

**Types of data collected.** What type of data will be collected? If you conduct interviews or solicit responses from people, your data will be verbal, auditory and perhaps visual if you videotape the interviews. In addition, you may collect other types of data such as journals, pictures, or artifacts. It is important to indicate exactly what types of data will be collected and the rationale for collecting that data.

**The research protocol.** Include the research protocol in an appendix. The protocol should include your interview script, and the script includes your interview questions, probing questions you might ask, and opening and closing remarks.

**Audit trail.** The audit trail enhances the rigor and trustworthiness of your research. In this section, describe how you will conduct your audit. Often an audit is conducted by keeping a research journal in which you discuss the data collection within a contextual framework. The purpose of the audit is for the reader to be able to understand what was done within the context of the research and to understand any deviations that were made from the research protocol.

**Pilot study.** Clearly describe your pilot study participants. Then explain how the pilot study will be conducted. In your dissertation, you will include the results of the pilot study and discuss any changes made as a result of the pilot study.

**Field tests.** Field tests are often done in qualitative research to assess the quality of the research questions. In the field test, the researcher contacts three to five people who are experts in the type of research being conducted and asks them to review the interview questions. The focus is on alignment of the research questions with the research design and on the quality of the actual questions.

If you conduct a field test, describe your field test participants and how you conducted the field test. In your dissertation, include the results of the field test and discuss any changes made to your protocol as a result.



## Considerations for Alignment



- Alignment with the purpose of the research.
- Alignment with the research questions.
- Alignment with the research design.
- Should align with procedures followed.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D., & Murphy, K. (2013). Rigour in qualitative case-study research. *Nurse Researcher* 20, 4, 12–17.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 16, 103–121.
- Martinez, R., Lewis, C., & Weinder, B. (2014). Instrumentation issues in implementation science. *Implementation Science*, 9(118), 1–9. Retrieved from <http://www.implementationscience.com/content/9/1/118>
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write the section on data collection methods. Be sure to address each of the points listed below.

- Data collection method.
- Types of data to be collected and unit(s) of analysis.
- Research protocol.
- Justification of data collection protocol.
- How data will be generated, gathered, and recorded.
- How data will be tracked.
- Audit trail.
- Pilot study, field test.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Data Collection

- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes and justifies the data collection method(s) (e.g., interview, focus group, observation).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Addresses what types of data will be collected and the unit(s) of analysis.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Includes detailed protocol(s) in an appendix for data collection (e.g., interview protocol/script, focus group protocol/script).
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Justifies contents of data collection protocols by connection to the research questions posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly describes the process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly describes the systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings (research logs, reflective journals, and cataloging systems).



### from the Research Review Board

- Clearly describe all instrumentation.
- Propose a pilot test for any instrumentation lacking prior validation.
- Your interview or observation protocols will have face validity.

## Procedures Followed

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.6 in the *Field Guide*

In this section, describe and justify your data collection method. Qualitative researchers can use various documents, interviews, artifacts, and observations for phenomenological research. Interviews can be semi-structured, structured, or unstructured. Focus groups can also be used.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a set of questions but can deviate from the questions by asking additional questions to get clarification for any answers. Unstructured interviews are more like a conversation. The researcher might start the interview by saying,

“Tell me about . . .” Additional questions flow from responses to the previous questions. When conducting a structured interview, the researcher does not deviate from the interview script.

You can conduct interviews in several different ways. You can conduct semi-structured interviews with an individual or a focus group. Interviews can be conducted in person, via telephone, via online sites such as SurveyMonkey, by using Skype, or through email. In-person interviews are preferred because they give you the opportunity to observe each participant and to make notes regarding body language or how the person reacts to questions. But sometimes in-person interviews are not possible because of constraints caused by distance and cost. The telephone interview does not give you the opportunity to observe the participants, but you can be aware of changes in voice and make note of this. Using email or online sites can be convenient, but they do not allow you to see or hear the participants. In addition, when you use email or SurveyMonkey, you run the risk of someone other than the intended participant answering your questions.

Gathering documents and artifacts relevant to the phenomenon being studied will provide additional information that you can use to supplement the data gathered from interviews. Data such as newspaper accounts, pictures, audio tapes, or video tapes can provide good sources of information regarding the phenomenon. Archival data can also provide valuable information. If you use archival data, remember that you probably must get permission to access it unless it is in the public domain.

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



In this section clearly describe exactly how you will collect data and what will be collected. Provide a step-by-step account of the data collection process so that anyone could replicate your study. Explain what data will be collected and why it is being collected, and then explain how you will collect it.

Explain where the interviews will be held, and discuss issues of confidentiality that might be impacted by the setting. The research setting should be a place that provides a quiet confidential place to conduct the interviews. For example, libraries often have conference rooms that can be used at no cost, whereas it is not a good idea to hold an interview at Starbucks. If you are conducting your research within your participants' work setting, you will need to consider how you will protect the anonymity of your participants.

Also, if relevant, discuss when the interviews will be held. Generally, make certain that the interviews are held at a convenient time for your participants.

If you are videotaping or audiotaping your interviews, you must discuss this. In addition, this must be noted in the informed consent form.

If you will be using incentives to solicit participants, discuss this and explain what the incentive is and justify why you are using it. It is usually not a good idea to offer a cash reward for participation. If you offer too little, the incentive might not be effective. If you offer too much, data collection might be influenced because people may agree to participate because of the reward rather than because they are interested in helping you gather data.

*(Cont.)*

## Critical Points to Address for This Section (cont.)



Some researchers offer other types of incentives, such as holding a drawing and giving the lucky winner a gift card of some sort.

Other issues to consider include how you will make participants comfortable during the interview, what the seating arrangement will be, whether you will provide food or something to drink, such as coffee or water. This information does not have to be provided in this section, but it should be included in your research protocol.

If you are conducting interviews, you must transcribe your recordings of them verbatim into written form. You can do this by listening carefully to each section and then typing it verbatim. This method can take a long time, especially if you are not a fast typist. Faster, automated ways include the following:

- You can buy transcription programs that will transcribe the interviews from an audio or visual tape into written form.
- There are also apps available for your cell phone that allow you to transcribe taped interviews onto your computer.
- You can also hire a transcriptionist to transcribe the data. If using a transcriptionist, you must have him or her sign a confidentiality agreement.

There should be no names identified on your recording or on the transcript. Instead, identify participants by using the personal identifier you assigned to each person.

After the interview has been transcribed, return the interview to the participant for member checking. Researchers use member checking to ensure the accuracy and validity of their results. Ask participants to review the transcript of their interview for accuracy and to make any necessary additions, corrections, or deletions. The member checked version of the transcript is the one you will use for data analysis.

If you are collecting written material, pictures, audio or visual tapes, or artifacts, explain where you will access this information. Sometimes consent is needed to use these resources. If that is the case, explain it in this section and provide a copy of the consent form in the an appendix.

Create a research protocol that will include a detailed step-by-step account of exactly how your data will be collected. Provide the protocol in an appendix. In addition, maintain an audit trail while collecting and analyzing your data.

## Considerations for Alignment



- Must align with the research method and design.
- Must align with the research purpose.
- Must align with information provided in Chapter 1.
- Must align with information provided in the data collection methods section.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road-map from beginning to end* [Kindle Edition]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.). (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 16,103–121.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Polkinghorne, D. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52,137–145. doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Stewart, D., & Shamdasani (2015). *Focus groups: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write your section on procedures followed, addressing each of the following points:

- Provide the sequence of steps that will be used to collect the data.
- Provide justification for each step of the data collection.
- Address the quality of the research.
- Explain the relationship of the pilot study to the full study.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Procedures Followed

- \_\_\_\_\_ States the sequence of steps followed in conducting the research, from development of the research instrument(s) to data analysis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Details all steps in a way that another researcher could follow the steps to reproduce the study.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Explains the relation of the pilot study to the full study, if applicable.



### from the Research Review Board

- Describe and justify your data collection technique.

## Trustworthiness

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.9 in the *Field Guide*

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), transparency in research procedures is crucial for establishing trustworthiness and credibility. Establishing transparency requires clear documentation of research procedures and developing a study protocol that can be easily followed.

According to Yin (2014), trustworthiness stems from triangulating the data and maintaining a chain of evidence. Yin suggested that having multiple sources of data helps capture a broader range of perspectives, behaviors, and attitudes.

Research credibility refers to the degree to which the research accurately presents participants' perceptions, feelings, and actions. Credibility stems from the researcher being aware of any personal biases that might impact the research. It is important to discuss any personal biases and to explain how they may impact the research. It is also important to discuss how these biases will be mitigated.

In qualitative research, confirmability involves reflexivity and the use of an audit trail that links case data to study participant responses (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Giorgi (1985) discussed the concept of reflexivity in data collection and analysis as a way to increase confirmability and trustworthiness. Reliability is also a function of researcher trustworthiness and credibility (Yin, 2010). Journaling is one approach to establishing trustworthiness and credibility, because it allows for introspection regarding the data collected.

According to Yin, dependability, which is similar to reliability in qualitative research, refers to being able to replicate cases procedurally without attempting to replicate results. So it is important to replicate data collection in exactly the same manner with each participant. Doing so assures that data collection procedures are sound and dependable.

Qualitative research results cannot be transferred or generalized to a different population. However, if the researcher carefully describes the sample and research methods, the reader can decide whether the results are applicable to their own population.

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are fundamental elements of qualitative research that allow the reader to assess the value of your research. In this section, you must discuss procedures you will use to ensure the accuracy of your data and how you will lessen the impact of researcher bias and ensure the research is trustworthy. Address all four points—credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability—explaining what they mean and then discussing how you will ensure that they are addressed in your research.

**Credibility.** How will you make your research more credible? How will you mitigate any biases? How will you ensure the accuracy of your data collection and data analysis?

**Transferability.** Generally, results of qualitative research are not transferable or generalizable to another population. However, if you clearly describe your population and sample, the reader will be able to decide whether the results can transfer to another population.

**Dependability.** How will you make certain that your results are dependable? Yin suggested that dependability increases when you make certain that procedural approaches remain constant throughout the research. How will you do this?

**Confirmability.** Confirmability requires use of an audit trail and chain of evidence so that the reader can know that the results are valid and that the research was done with rigor and thoughtfulness. How will you increase the confirmability of your research? What chain of evidence will you have?

### Considerations for Alignment



- Must align with research method and design.
- Must align with procedures followed.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2008). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A roadmap from beginning to end* [Kindle Edition]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Giorgi, A. (Ed.) (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Harrison, J., MacGibbon, L., Morton, M. (2001). Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: The rigors of reciprocity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7, 323–345.
- Morrow, S. (2005). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 250–260.
- Williams E. (2009). Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A panparadigmatic perspective. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 576–582.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write the section on trustworthiness, addressing each of the following points:

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability
- What procedures will you follow to ensure accuracy of the data and lessen researcher bias (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation)?

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Trustworthiness

- \_\_\_\_\_ Addresses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shows evidence of quality by discussing how procedures will be/were followed to ensure the accuracy of the data and lessen the impact of researcher bias (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation).



## TIPS

### from the Research Review Board

- Describe threats to the internal and external validity of your study.
- Address researcher bias.
- Address transferability.

## Ethical Concerns

*(This is the main heading for this section)*

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Chapter 13 in the *Field Guide*

Section 11.6 in the *Field Guide*

Section 12.5 in the *Field Guide*

Ethics have always been an important consideration when doing research and are regulated by law and ethical standards. Creswell (2013) suggested that ethical concerns need to be considered throughout the process of doing research. He suggested that prior to conducting the research it is important to seek approval from the IRB and to gain permission from an external institution to solicit participants. You must select an institution that has no vested interest in the study's outcome so the researcher is not swayed in a particular direction.

When beginning to conduct the research, disclose the purpose of the study clearly and do not pressure participants to sign the informed consent form. Creswell (2013) also noted that it is important to be aware of cultural norms and the needs of any vulnerable populations that may be part of the research.

During the actual data collection, cause as little disruption as possible. Avoid deception. Be aware of the power imbalance that is inherent in the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and avoid any exploitation.

In the analysis phase, maintain objectivity and present all data, not just what will support your view. Respect the privacy of participants and do not divulge any information that might identify participants.

In the reporting phase, do not falsify data, analysis, or conclusions. Falsifying data can lead to very unfortunate consequences for both the researcher and the community. Do not disclose information that could hurt others, and do not plagiarize any part of your research or analysis.

**Informed consent.** Mandel and Parija (2014) pointed out that informed consent is the bond of trust between the researcher and the participants. It is the single most important aspect of any good research, because it assures the participants that their well-being will be protected and that they have self-determination in terms of participating in the research. In obtaining

informed consent from participants, there are several things to consider. First, the language of the informed consent must be clear and written in a way that the potential participants can understand. If you are working with someone from a different culture or for whom English is a second language, make certain that the person can understand what the informed consent form says. Likewise, if you are working with someone who may be impaired cognitively, be certain that this person has the capacity to understand and sign the informed consent. Weiss Roberts (2002) suggested that the researcher must consider several factors when seeking informed consent: developmental factors, illness related factors, psychological issues, cultural and religious values, and external pressures.

The informed consent form must include specific items. The Common Rule (1991) regulates informed consent. Subpart A, section 46.116 of Protection of Human Subjects (1974/2009) requires communicating the following general informed consent requirements to study subjects as applicable:

- Potential risks
- Benefits for study participants
- A statement of the time frame in which the data will remain confidential
- Contact information
- A statement that participation is voluntary
- A statement that refusal to participate will not result in any penalties or adverse effects
- A statement that study participants may discontinue participation at any time and how they may discontinue participation.

When writing the informed consent section of Chapter 3, address all the issues listed above. Clearly describe how you will obtain informed consent from your subjects, and obtain consent prior to collecting any data.

In addition, explain how you will protect your subjects from any harm. It is important to carefully consider the potential for any harm resulting from the research. Something that might seem quite innocent could, in fact, cause harm. For example, you might be doing a study on obesity in adolescents. In your study you want to find out what the experience of being obese is like for teenagers. Although your questions may seem quite innocuous, they could cause undue stress for an adolescent who has fought to lose weight for several years and has been the object of bullying because of weight issues. Remember, it is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants, so you must carefully consider any potential harm and how you will mitigate it.

Deception and concealment are generally frowned upon in research. However, sometimes deception is necessary. If deception or concealment is used, the researcher must take time to debrief the participants and explain the nature of the deception after the data is collected.

## Critical Points to Address for This Section



There are three main parts for the section on informed consent. First, explain what is in the informed consent form. Also indicate which appendix the informed consent form is in.

Next, explain exactly how you will distribute the informed consent form and secure participant signatures. The signature must be secured prior to data collection.

Finally, discuss any issues regarding data collection that might prove harmful to your clients, and discuss how you have addressed these issues in the informed consent form.

## Considerations for Alignment



- Must align with research method and design.

## Suggested Resources for Enrichment



American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S. (2009). Ethical practices in qualitative research. In D. M. Mertens & D. E. Ginsberg (Eds), *The handbook of social research ethics* (pp. 150–169). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Mandel, J., & Parija, S. C. (2014). Informed consent in research. *Tropical Parasitology*, 4(2), 78–79.

Miller, T., Birch, M., Mauthner, M., & Jessop, J. (2012). *Ethics in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Weiss Roberts, L., (2002). Informed consent and the capacity for voluntarism. *Psychiatry*, 159, 705–712.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write the section on informed consent, addressing each of the following points:

- Explain how you will distribute informed consent forms and secure participant signatures.

(Cont.)

## Write Your Dissertation (cont.)



- Make certain that all elements of the informed consent are explained and that a copy of the informed consent form is in an appendix:
  - potential risks;
  - benefits for study participants;
  - a statement of the time frame in which the data will remain confidential;
  - contact information;
  - a statement that participation is voluntary;
  - a statement that refusal to participate will not result in any penalties or adverse effects; and
  - a statement that study participants may discontinue participation at any time and how they may discontinue participation.
- Explain how you will protect your participants from any harm.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Address how you intend to maintain confidentiality.

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.5 in the *Field Guide*

Chapter 13 in the *Field Guide*

**Confidentiality.** Confidentiality is another important consideration in qualitative research. Never use the name of an organization as the site for your research unless given written consent to do so. Generally, it is better to simply describe the organization rather than actually naming it. Your participants must also be identified but not named.

Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2014) pointed out how difficult maintaining anonymity is, especially when gathering data in a small setting or from a specific group of people. Many researchers use an alphanumeric coding system that can identify the group to which the person belongs but not the actual person. For example, you may use a code in which the first number depicts the number of the interview, the second letter depicts the group the person belongs to, and the third depicts gender. Thus, if you were interviewing survivors of a tornado in order to understand what that experience was like for them, you might code the first male as 1M and the first female as 1F to delineate male and female and the order of the interview. This code would be used for all data collected and would also be given to the participant. If the participant decides to withdraw from the research, the participant would simply give their alphanumeric code to the researcher, who could then access the data associated with this code. Another approach might be to ask the participant to provide a PIN that they devise and record on the informed consent form. All data collected would be identified only by the PIN provided.

The concept of confidentiality goes beyond protecting the names of the participants. It is also important to consider how you will protect your data, both in its written form and on your computer. All written data must be kept in a locked file cabinet that is only accessible to the researcher. Your computer files should be password protected. Anything stored in a cloud database should be encrypted. Your informed consent, which identifies the names of your participants, must be stored separately from your data.

Research material is generally kept for three years after completion of the dissertation. Following this three-year period, the researcher must destroy the data so that it cannot be copied or used by anyone else. Clearly explain how your data will be destroyed.

### Critical Points to Address for This Section



In this section, you should discuss how you will maintain anonymity for your participants. Issues such as using a PIN or other ways to identify the data should be discussed. Clearly explain any type of coding you might use to identify participants in the research data. In addition, discuss how you will maintain anonymity if you are conducting interviews at a place of work.

Discuss how you will keep the data confidential, including where you will store your data and how it will be destroyed after the dissertation is completed. Your data should be accessible only to you and should be destroyed three years after the dissertation is completed.

### Considerations for Alignment



- Ethical issues should be considered in all aspects of the dissertation.

### Suggested Resources for Enrichment



Kaiser, K. (2009). Respecting respondent confidentiality in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(11), 1632–1641.

Petrova, E., Dewing, J. Camilleri, M. (2014). Confidentiality in participatory research: Challenges from one study. *Nursing Ethics*, 1–13. Retrieved from <http://nej.sagepub.com/contentproxy.phoenix.edu/content/early/2014/12/29/0969733014564909.full.pdf+html>

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., Kitzinger, C. (2014). Anonymising interview data: Challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative Research*, 1–17. doi:10.1177/1468794114550439

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template write the section on confidentiality, addressing each of the following points:

- Method by which you will maintain anonymity of participants.
- How you will store your data.
- How and when data will be destroyed.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

**Additional issues to consider.** Remember that there is an imbalance of power between the researcher and the participant. The notion that the researcher has power over study participants was made very clear in the famous Milgram experiments. In this study the researchers were able to convince participants to administer shocks, ranging from mild to lethal, in a supposed learning experiment. The participants assumed the researchers knew best and did what they were told rather than doing what they felt comfortable doing.

Because you hold more power, it is your responsibility as the researcher to keep your participants safe. This is especially true when working with a protected class who may not be able to give true informed consent, such as prisoners or children. Also be careful that your questions are worded so that they will not hurt or offend anyone. When dealing with sensitive material, consider how you will deal with your participants if they become uncomfortable as a result of your questions.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write the section on ethical concerns by combining the sections on consent and confidentiality, addressing the following:

- Informed consent: Explain how you will distribute an informed consent form and secure participant signatures.
- Make certain that all elements of the informed consent form are explained and that a copy is in an appendix:
  - potential risks;
  - benefits for study participants;
  - a statement of the time frame that the data will remain confidential;
  - contact information;
  - a statement that participation is voluntary;
  - a statement that refusal to participate will not result in any penalties or adverse effects; and
  - a statement that study participants may discontinue participation at any time and how they may discontinue participation.
- Explain how you will protect your participants from any harm.

(Cont.)

## Write Your Dissertation (cont.)



- Confidentiality:
  - method by which you will maintain anonymity of participants;
  - how you will store your data; and
  - how and when data will be destroyed.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Ethical Concerns

- \_\_\_\_\_ Provides adequate measures for ethical protection of participants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Includes detailed information about the informed consent process and how informed consent will be obtained.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Includes informed consent letter in an appendix.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Includes detailed information about how confidentiality is addressed.

### TIPS

#### from the Research Review Board

- Clearly describe all processes and procedures, keeping ethical concerns in mind.

## Data Analysis

*(This is a main heading)*

### ***Background Reading for This Section***

Section 12.8 in the *Field Guide*

Data analysis in qualitative research is difficult—generally there is a lot of data that must be analyzed and there are different units of analysis. In addition, data analysis is not the same from one qualitative design to the next. Moustakas (1994) outlined the modified Van Kaam for phenomenological studies. Yin (2014) provided information on how to analyze case study

data. Creswell (2013) provided some ideas for the various types of data analysis. Generally, qualitative researchers complete the first steps of data analysis as they collect data rather than waiting until all of it is collected. This makes it easier to analyze the data and also helps them to know when data saturation has occurred.

Wertz (2005) delineated common steps to phenomenological research analysis:

- In the preparation phase, the researcher listens to and transcribes verbal descriptions and interviews. Then, without the research focus in mind, she reads the data for the first time, to grasp the participants' expressions and meanings in their broadest context. She may create meaning units to organize the data for later analysis. She may also eliminate redundancy if the data do not add meaning to the description of the phenomenon. In this phase she may also identify themes and code or categorize data.
- Phenomenological research requires an attitude of wonder—it must be approached as if the researcher has never experienced the phenomenon before and has no knowledge of it. She must try to leave her own views behind and empathically join the stories of the participants. She must have no value judgment regarding what the participants say. Instead, the focus is on the meaning of the experience from the perspective of the participants who lived it. The researcher focuses on what was experienced and how it was experienced through a focus on psychological processes and bodily, perceptual, emotional, imaginative, linguistic, social, and behavioral contexts.
- The phenomenological researcher analyzes individual descriptions by focusing on particular situations. She focuses on the relationships between different parts of the situation and the psychological processes underlying those experiences in order to understand how each component contributes to the whole of the experience. She tries to read between the lines to really grasp the essence of the experience for each person. Finally, the researcher may abandon *epoche* and review the situation in view of previous concepts and theories. She may use preconceptions as heuristic guides to reveal information that may not otherwise be evident.
- Researchers usually want to gain general knowledge about a topic. To do this, the researcher looks for general characteristics and features in the participants' responses as a whole. In other words, she compares individual cases and identifies commonalities. Both the common aspects and the individual differences are analyzed and considered part of the conclusions.

Moustakas (1994) espouses another approach to analysis that involves phenomenological reduction. Phenomenological reduction includes bracketing, horizontalizing, organizing invariant qualities and themes, and constructing textural descriptions. In this approach, data analysis starts as soon as data is available. Horizontalization gives equal value to each statement that represents a segment of meaning. These segments are clustered into themes that are synthesized into a description of the texture, or the *what* of the phenomenon.

The textural description is then analyzed from different perspectives (imaginative variation) with the idea of arriving at a description of the structure of the phenomenon. This description represents the meaning and essence of the experience. The textural-structural descriptions are produced for each participant and are then integrated into a universal description of the group experience.



Computer programs such as NVivo and Dedoose—there are several others—can help with analysis. If you plan to use one of these programs, download the program ahead of time and take the tutorials available for them. Generally, the programs provide a trial period to get proficient with them. With most programs, you can upload your transcript and the program will find the words, sentences, and sub-sentences or nodes for you.

### **Critical Points to Address for This Section**



In this section, detail exactly how you will analyze your data after it is collected. Discuss the steps you will take to aggregate and code your data and how you will derive themes from the results. If you are using a computer program such as NVivo, it is not enough to say that you will use this program. You must give a detailed description of exactly how you will use the program. If there are discrepant cases, you must explain how you will deal with them. Also address how your analysis will be aligned with the research questions.

### **Considerations for Alignment**



- Analysis of the data must be aligned with the research method and design.
- Must align with research questions so they can be answered.

### **Suggested Resources for Enrichment**



- Chanail, R. (2012). Conducting qualitative data analysis: Reading line by line but analyzing by meaningful qualitative units. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(1), 266–269.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Elo, S., Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngas, H. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis: A focus on trustworthiness*. doi:10.1177/2158244014522633.
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Write Your Dissertation



In your dissertation template, write your section on data analysis, addressing each of the following points:

- Articulate clearly how and when your data will be analyzed.
- Align the data analysis plan with your research design to answer the research questions.
- Describe how you will deal with discrepant cases.
- If using a software program, clearly describe how it will be used.
- Provide details about how you will code the data and how you will develop your themes or categories.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

## Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook*



### Data Analysis

- \_\_\_\_\_ Articulates how and when the data will be or were analyzed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Aligns the detailed data analysis plan with the specific research design to generate answers to the research questions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describes procedures for dealing with discrepant cases.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If a software program was used to aid analysis, clearly describes how it was used.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gives details about the coding procedure and how themes or categories were developed.

### TIPS

#### from the Research Review Board

- Make sure your data analysis plan is clear, appropriate, and aligned with your specific research design, research questions, and hypotheses.

# Summary

*(This is a main heading)*

## **Background Reading for This Section**

The summary provides a short, concise summary of what was included in Chapter 3 and introduces the content of Chapter 4. The summary should not include any new information or quotations.

### **Critical Points to Address for This Section**



In the summary, summarize what is in Chapter 3. Do not add any new information. Your summary should be short and concise. At the end of the summary, add a paragraph indicating what will be in Chapter 4. Remember, Chapter 4 is your results section, so simply indicate that Chapter 4 will include the results of your research.

### **Considerations for Alignment**



- Your summary should align with all the sections of the chapter.

### **Write Your Dissertation**



In your dissertation template, write the summary section, addressing each of the points listed below.

- Summarize main points of chapter 3.
- Introduce Chapter 4.

*Remember: Ensure that your writing is cohesive. The ideas should flow logically and with appropriate transitions between sentences.*

### **Self-Check Your Work Against the *Dissertation Handbook***



#### **Summary**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Summarizes key points in the chapter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bridges to Chapter 4.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Conforms to the recommended length of 10 to 25 pages for the entirety of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 should be 10 to 25 pages long. Assemble all sections you wrote for this workbook into one coherent whole.