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INTRODUCTION TO THIS DOCUMENT

Disclaimers

Neither this guide, nor any of the information and requirements contained herein, constitute a contract or create any contractual commitments between Capella University and any student, any prospective student, or any third party. The information and program requirements contained in the Dissertation Manual are subject to change.

This Chapter Guide describes qualitative research approaches that may not be approved for all schools. Read your school’s “Acceptable Methods” document on iGuide to determine which approaches can be used in your school.

Purpose of this Document

This document presents detailed information about each of the Chapters required for a Capella dissertation. Sections within each Chapter are also described. Each section in this document aligns with the Dissertation Template for Qualitative Studies. Carefully read the Chapter Guides so that you can be certain to provide the material that is necessary to successfully write each section of your dissertation.

Consult with your mentor about adding headings that might be necessary to enhance the organizational structure of your dissertation.

*Note: You are reporting a study that has already been conducted, therefore you need to write using past tense verbs. You cannot just copy from the research plan without changing the verb tense.

Turnitin

To ensure the originality of your work and the use of appropriate citations, you should submit your dissertation work through Turnitin (TII). TII is a free source-matching tool provided to Capella learners. TII analyzes your examination responses for unintentional plagiarism and improper source referencing. Be sure to allow 24 hours for a response from TII and allow time for editing. If you have questions about using TII, review Capella’s Turnitin tutorials. You will find a number of job aids and tutorials. It is especially critical to understand how to interpret your originality report and how to revise plagiarized or matching text. The following resources provide information on interpreting your report and revising:

Resources

- It’s Not About the Number: http://campustools.capella.edu/redirect.aspx?linkid=3944
- Similarity Check: http://turnitin.com/en_us/training/student-training/viewing-originality-reports
- Revising Plagiarized Text: http://campustools.capella.edu/redirect.aspx?linkid=3945
- Academic Integrity and Honesty: 3.01.01 Academic Integrity and Honesty

As you work through your dissertation, you should use the TII source matching tool to check drafts of your work. You may use the draft TII links multiple times to resubmit your paper for analysis as part of your editing process. The previous report will always be replaced by the newer version so it is wise to alternate submitting to Drafts 1–5.
Doctoral Publications Review

Doctoral learners must submit completed dissertations and doctoral capstone abstracts for review by Capella's Doctoral Publications Review team, which monitors to ensure that these deliverables meet Capella's standards for academic writing and ethical research, and that there is no evidence of plagiarism. It is not the function of the reviewers to revise, edit or proofread the dissertation or doctoral capstone. The reviewers will identify issues needing to be addressed by the learner. Learners are responsible for making required corrections based on the notes from the reviewer, with input and support from their mentor. Reviewers frequently request a second review to ensure that required corrections have been made.

Carefully review the criteria for Doctoral Publications Review. It’s important to check your work against these requirements and work with your mentor to ensure you've adhered to these criteria prior to submitting your manuscript for your committee's and school's review. The reviewer will check that you have met requirements in the following key areas:

- Ethical and Legal Requirements
- APA Alignment Requirements
- Dissertation/Capstone Document Requirements
- Writing-Related Requirements

Resources

Writing, Revising & Doctoral Publications Review
https://campus.capella.edu/web/doctoral-programs/research-scholarship/writing-revising-format-editing-review

Doctoral Publications Review Criteria:
http://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/Criteria%20Overview.pdf

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

All research reports (including dissertations) begin with an introduction describing the problem under investigation in quantitative studies and need for the study in qualitative studies and its background, its relevance to the field, and the assumptions and the limitations of the study. This section of the Guide outlines the main sections required in Chapter One. This Chapter One Guide is organized according to the sections found in most dissertations. Each section explains the terminology and identifies the issues that need consideration in that section. As a general guideline, Chapter One is typically 15-20 pages long.

Chapter One should discuss seven specific points: 1) an introduction describing the background of the study; 2) the statement of the need for the study; 3) the purpose and significance of the study; 4) the research design; 5) the research question; (6) the assumptions and limitations of the study; and 7) definitions of terms used in the study. There is also a final section where you will summarize Chapter One and describe the organization and general content of the rest of the dissertation.

Use this Guide to help you write Chapter One. It describes each section to help you ensure that you have covered the necessary material. You are encouraged to refer to your approved Dissertation Research Plan to guide your content for Chapter One.

Before beginning the first section, “Background of the Study,” write an introduction to the chapter that begins directly after the CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION heading. The introduction should identify the research topic and the main points of Chapter One. The Dissertation Template provides all of the necessary headings and sections required for your dissertation. It is recommended that you use it for all work.

Background of the Study

As the first section of your dissertation, you want to begin by providing your reader with a broad base of understanding of the research topic. In “Background of the Study” the goal is to give the reader an overview of the topic, and its context within the real world, research literature, and theory. The section should focus on the phenomenon under investigation.

This section articulates the following four main points:

1) What is the general phenomenon of interest to the researcher? In what setting(s) does it occur, and whom does it affect? What are the negative aspects of the phenomenon?

2) What did the researcher find in the literature about the problem or phenomenon under inquiry? What is already known? What are the current best explanations of the problem, phenomenon, or its solutions? How strong is the underlying evidence supporting the current explanations and are there problems with those studies? What issues remain to be understood? These questions would be answered only briefly, in summary, form, in this section. They will form the backbone of the discussion in the next section (“Need for the Study”). The complete literature review will be presented in Chapter Two.

3) What interests the researcher in choosing this problem or phenomenon for investigation?

4) What general theory was used to understand the phenomenon?

This section also should identify the theoretical framework of the study (which will be fully discussed in Chapter Two). This is the basic explanation of the problem currently accepted
by the researchers who have been working on the problem. This simply means that one uses an already-accepted account of the wider problem as the framework for considering new information about the problem.

Naturally, like everything in a research design, the theoretical framework needs to be justified. Showing the following will justify the choice of a theoretical framework:

1) Show that the theory is consistent with all the other design elements.
2) Show that the theory is used by other researchers investigating the same or similar kinds of problems.
3) Show that the theory flows logically from the problem.
4) Describe any theoretical implications that the proposed study may have for understanding phenomena. For example, will the study generate new theory, provide a description of the lived experience of the participants, or provide a description of a cultural phenomenon?

Need for the Study

NOTE: In SOBT, this section is called “Rationale.”

This section focuses on the need for the study. The need for the study is often referred to as the “gap in the research literature” that your study addresses. It is often stated as something that is unknown or has not been previously researched.

This section should clearly articulate how the study will relate to the current literature. This is done by describing findings from the research literature that define the gap. Typically, researchers will approach this by indicating that previous studies have found “A,” “B,”” and “C;” but “D” had not been investigated.

This section need not be lengthy, but should be very clear what the need for the study is and why it should be investigated.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of any research study is to address the need for the study. In this section, you will discuss in more detail how your study will add to the knowledge base. Focus on addressing the need for the study in order to help the wider community of interest and to increase knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation. Refer to the current literature and research evidence to show that the study is needed to advance understanding of the phenomenon.

Significance of the Study

In this section, once again you should keep in mind the need for the study. Here you also will focus on any other intended audiences or the stakeholders in your study. What will your study offer them?

You will show how your study will be meaningful or valuable to:

- The wider community who have a vested interest in the problem or need for the study.
- In the first part of the significance section, you will discuss how important the need for the study is to groups in the wider communities. Avoid sentimental statements in
favor of using evidence that makes your case. If solving the problem or addressing
the need for the study will create knowledge that can be used by others, then the
relevant community is wider, and the significance of the study is greater. If your
study really will not have much importance outside a specific community or group,
then that is its significance. One should never make claims of wider significance that
the study will not deliver.

- The professionals in your discipline who are interested in your need for the study (as
  shown by the existence of a body of research relevant to it).

- Here you should focus on the research problem or need for the study, and the
  community within your discipline or specialization interested in that. You can also
  include professionals in another field who may be impacted by your findings. Do not
  simply assert that your findings will potentially be valuable to professionals in your
  field—explain why you think so. The surest way to do this is to cite research that
  calls for the type of study you plan to do.

- The knowledge base and theories of your discipline.

- Next, you will turn to how important the need for the study is, and explain how the
  study was an advancement in terms of rigor and how it contributed new information
  to the knowledge base and theory. Present a justification that the findings make a
  meaningful contribution to the knowledge base and to the advancement of the theory
  (or theories) that provide the framework for your research. Make a clear case,
  supported by relevant sources, that your research increased understanding of the
  experience or lived experience, and research population.

Research Question

In this section, list the research question, and subquestions if applicable. Wherever the
research question appears in the dissertation, it must be exactly the same as it appears
here. Qualitative studies are usually led by one open-ended question; however, in some
cases there may be more. If you have more than one research question, the heading of this
section should be plural ("Research Questions).

Researchers needing more information about research questions should see Appendix A.

Definitions of Terms

Qualitative definitions of terms rely on description and interpretation, not on measurement.
Therefore, the definitions should have two components: a conceptual definition of the
phenomena or experiences being investigated, plus a statement of how the phenomenon
will actually be observed. Some of the key constructs that you need to define depending on
their relevance to your study are feelings about the experience under investigation,
thoughts about the experience, the process of making sense about the experience, and so
on. You also must include definitions of key concepts that describe your research population
and sample. These should be presented in a glossary format, with the terms in alphabetical
order; the definitions must be cited using psychological literature.

Research Design

In this section, identify and describe the methodology, approach, and design that you used
to solve the research problem or address the need for the study. Include support for why
the chosen methodology, approach, and design were appropriate for solving the research
problem or addressing the need for the study, and answering the research question(s).
Provide support that these are appropriate and acceptable for research in your discipline
and your research topic. Limit this section to no more than one page. All references that
describe qualitative methodology, approaches, or designs should be cited from primary
sources.
Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Your study, like all research, necessarily takes many things for granted. In legal terminology, it "stipulates" them. This means that everyone agrees without more ado to accept them as true without going through the tedious business of proving them to be true. But this acceptance does not mean that assumptions must not be defended; like every other element of your dissertation, they must have some support.

Two issues must be addressed about your assumptions: (a) Where do they come from? (b) How far down the "chain of assumptions" must you go in identifying them and supporting them?

Where do assumptions come from? There are a number of sources of your assumptions. They can be identified as general methodological assumptions, theoretical assumptions, and topic-specific assumptions.

General methodological assumptions

First, in any methodology, generations of methodologists before you have done the tedious work of identifying some important and basic assumptions one must make to do the kind of research you are setting out to do. For instance, if you are going to interview participants, you must assume they will be telling you the truth (unless you can figure out a way to catch them if they lie). This and many similar assumptions are "universal research assumptions" and you will find them in the advanced methodology articles devoted to your particular study's methodology. Your particular design and sample may imply certain assumptions as well. Think carefully about all elements of your design to make sure you understand what you are assuming or taking for granted by using them.

In general, all methodologies make a number of critically important assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) which you need to be familiar with and to identify in your prospectus. These fall into the following categories:

Ontology: Is reality a single phenomenon, or are there multiple realities? (Most quantitative studies assume that reality, measured in units, is the same for everyone; qualitative studies assume that one person’s reality may be independent, socially constructed, or different from another person’s reality).

Epistemology: Are the knower (researcher) and the known (participants and data) dependent or independent? (Most quantitative researchers assume them to be entirely or nearly entirely independent; how the researcher feels or believes is irrelevant to the outcome of a measurement. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, assume the opposite: Interviewer and interviewee mutually influence each other in their conversations.)

Axiology: Should research and researchers be value-laden or value-free? (Quantitative work assumes a degree of “value-freedom,” but qualitative analysis does not. Be careful to specify values you bring to your study, particularly since you are doing qualitative work. For instance, believing that law-and-order is a cardinal principle of a healthy society may affect a researcher studying the behavior of the police.)

Generalizations: Is it possible to infer things about one group from knowledge about another? (Quantitative procedures set stringent rules for generalization; qualitative procedures do not.)

Causality: Do causes exist separately from their effects, preceding them temporally, or are causes and effects circular and mutually influential? (Quantitative research focuses on the degree to which causal inferences can be made in a study, whereas qualitative research does not.)

Logic: Is it better to search for principles from which to deduce predictions (theory), or to
gather numerous facts and infer meanings from observations? (Many texts make the broad claim that quantitative analysis is deductive whereas qualitative is inductive. This is not so clear in practice.)

Obviously, when you select a methodological stance (in your case, qualitative), you are selecting one end of the continua implied by this list. Quantitative perspectives tend to be positivist, and qualitative perspectives tend to be constructivist or interpretivist. Become familiar with the assumptive sets underlying these intellectual positions, so that you can defend them as appropriate to your research question and articulate, at least, their overall description.

**Theoretical assumptions**

Next, your theoretical framework (see the “Chapter Two” of this Guide for a full discussion of the “theoretical framework”) carries with it many particular assumptions. Some of them will bear on your study, and you will need to identify them.

**Topic-specific assumptions**

Additionally, the previous research and literature on your topic may reveal other topic-specific assumptions made by researchers in your field.

When specifying your assumptions, particularly the major ones, you should refer to literature where those assumptions are established or where they are simply "stipulated" by earlier researchers. Any assumptions (indeed, any design element) that have been accepted in a peer reviewed journal article can fairly safely be made in a dissertation. By convention, the stopping point is usually described when you have named the main assumptions you are making about these elements:

- Your methodological stance (positivist assumptions? constructivist assumptions? some mix of the two?)
- Your theoretical framework's main assumptions about the subject matter.
- The main assumptions about your subject matter shared by the previous researchers whose work you are relying on.
- Assumptions germane to the proper use of your methods of data collection.

**Limitations**

In addition to the study's assumptions, Chapter One also discusses its limitations (sometimes termed delimitations, check with your mentor). There are basically two forms of limitations you must discuss. The first group comprises any important issues regarding your research problem which for one reason or another you are not going to investigate. The second group contains elements of the study that limit its validity or credibility, its capacity for generalization, and so on—in other words, flaws in the design.

**Design flaw limitations.**

Limitations that arise from flaws in the design need to be considered carefully. The main ways which your study was flawed should be discussed in this limitations section. In this section, address the limitations of the methodology, approach, and design you used for your research. (Note that in Chapter Five, you will more thoroughly discuss these and more specific limitations that may have happened during the process of actually performing the research, such as not getting a large enough sample. Here in Chapter One, focus more on the design of the research and its limitations.)

The two main criteria for allowing a limitation to stand are these: (a) The flaw does not prevent you from doing a study that validly answers the research question and addressed the need for the study appropriately and relevantly; (b) the flaw neither impairs your ability to draw necessary conclusions nor renders those conclusions suspect.
Delimitations (intentional areas not investigated).

There is a second class of limitations: things that an educated or expert reader might expect your study to investigate that you are not going to investigate. Put generally, these limitations are "things the study will not investigate." ("Things the study will not investigate" are often called delimitations because they create artificial boundaries, they delimit, your study's focus.) To identify such delimitations, you will usually rely on two main sources: your literature review of the general problem and your theoretical orientation.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

In this section, briefly summarize the contents of Chapter One, and then give the reader an overview of the content of the remaining four chapters.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

All research reports, including dissertations, contain reviews of the research and scholarly literature on the topic. The main purpose of the literature review is to inform the reader what is known about your research topic, both in terms of research findings and theory.

This section of the Guide describes the main sections required in Chapter Two. Chapter Two should discuss five specific points: 1) the methods or procedures you used to search for sources; 2) the theoretical framework(s) or orientations you used for the study; 3) the actual review of the research literature; 4) a synthesis of the findings presented in the review; and 5) a critique of the research methods and procedures used in the sources in the literature review.

As a general rule, literature reviews for dissertations should be comprehensive and rigorous meaning that you have included all of the relevant published research and scholarly sources in your literature review. It is expected that your literature review is comprised of a majority of primary sources from your discipline. In addition, some schools request that you only utilize articles that are more recent, within the past five to seven years; however, in other schools, if you demonstrate the information is relevant to your study, the age of the article is not an issue. If you have a question about an article, contact your mentor.

Depending upon your research topic, literature reviews will range in the number of resources and the length of the chapter. For example, many dissertation literature reviews include 75 to 200 sources and the average number of pages is in the mid thirties. The key to a good literature review is read until you reach a point of saturation. In other words, you have exhausted the literature concerning your topic and then, write the number of pages required to succinctly support your topic. As a guideline, literature reviews should approximate 25 pages in length.

Before beginning with the first section, “Methods of Searching,” write an introduction to Chapter Two that identifies the main content you will cover in the chapter.

Methods of Searching

This section describes how you found the sources that you used for your literature review. Make sure to identify all of the databases you used, as well as search terms. Explain how you might have combined search terms, or used other search procedures, such as limiting searches to certain types of publications.

Theoretical Orientation for the Study

In this section of the literature review, cite the major references to support your theoretical orientation and briefly describe the orientation. Essentially, the “theoretical orientation” or framework is one’s "point of view" from which one writes the dissertation. Do not blur or blend theoretical frameworks unless they can be authentically integrated and unless the objective of the dissertation is best served by their integration. In that case, you will need a careful description of all the relevant theories in terms of their major references.

*Note: The following paragraph does not apply to the School of Education, which does not allow use of more than one theoretical framework.

When you intend to use more than one theoretical framework, you need to synthesize and integrate the different theories carefully. You must show how the concepts work together and can be validly considered together. In this sense, your "theoretical framework" can comprise a number of different theories, but be sure that they—or the constructs you borrow from them—are compatible (deal with the same material).

The theoretical orientation in qualitative studies tends to be focused on the theoretical foundation of the methodology and approach used in the research, rather than theory relevant to the research topic.
NOTE: For dissertations in Counseling, you will identify a topical framework that supports your study.

You may wish to use relevant APA style sub-headings in this section to organize your material.

As a general guideline, this section is typically 2-4 pages long.

**Review of the Literature**

Begin this section with an introduction which states the overall topic of the dissertation and provides an orienting paragraph or two, so the reader knows what the literature review is going to do. Describe how the section will be organized (what are the main points and in what order do they appear?).

The organization of the “Review of the Literature” is important. It can be organized by factors, by themes, historically or constructs to be addressed, by elements of the theoretical framework, by elements of the research design, or by another principle. Use APA style sub-headings to organize the main topics covered in this section. The flow of this section should be apparent to your readers All literature review sections follow some "logic," namely a method of organizing the main points so that they flow logically and support one another. The objective is to persuade the reader to accept one's approach to the study or research. To that end, you must show that your research is a logical development out of the previous research, and is not heading off in some uncharted and unsupported direction. When actually writing the literature review, do not simply string one study after another, even if they are well summarized and evaluated: Follow your organizing principle.

There will also be literature reviewed to support the methodological choices made in designing the study. In essence, this section of the literature review - in course papers as well as in dissertations - shows the research from which the key elements of the study or paper have been drawn. The review of literature should review and present both qualitative and quantitative studies relevant to the topic in the literature. By following your chosen organizing principle or logic, you will help your reader to follow the flow of your own thinking about how you approach the study and its elements.

Whatever organizing principle you choose, follow it strictly and use section sub-headings to keep the reader oriented. Each section or sub-section should support a conclusion or theme bearing on your overall answer, solution, or argument.

This section is typically 25 pages in length.

**Synthesis of the Research Findings**

This is where you pull together the findings and discuss the larger themes, inconsistencies, or relevant patterns based on the research studies you evaluated. Note that this is not merely a summary of the literature. You should present something new here that describes the bigger picture of the literature. In general, here is where your reader will see what the literature leads you to conclude about your own question, problem, or thesis; it also sets the stage for a discussion of the research methods in detail (Chapter Three).

This section will summarize the main points of Chapter Two, showing both the strengths and the weaknesses in your theoretical orientation and your project's relationship with the previous research on the topic, both in content (research findings) and methods (methodology).

This section is typically 3-4 pages long.
Critique of the Previous Research Methods

In this section, examine the quality of the research you have reviewed. What are the methodological strengths and limitations of the works you reviewed? How do those weaknesses, in particular, affect your own argument? You will be considering things such the rigor of designs, sampling errors, size of samples, quality of research instruments, appropriateness of statistical procedures, and any other issues related to the quality of research.

Here too is where you may bring up the opposing viewpoints, disconfirming evidence, or counterarguments to your main points. These can be discussed in conjunction with earlier sections if you prefer; it is recommended that you clearly identify sub-sections dealing with contrary opinions, evidence, or views, so that your readers will be fully informed both (a) that you did your literature review well and (b) understand all sides of the issue. It will be very important, when you describe your final theoretical framework, to explain why you abandoned any contrary evidence or adopted one viewpoint on a debate rather than another.

What if there is no controversy about your subject? (Be certain that is the case before asserting it.) In that case, show the methods you used to comb the literature (including related literature in closely-related fields) so that the readers can judge whether your claim (that there is no controversy) is well founded.

At the end of this section, you should have constructed a strong case for why your study will be a step forward in terms of research rigor.

This section is typically 2-4 pages long.

Summary

This should not be more than a page, and in general, will summarize the conclusions you have drawn from the previous literature on your topic or methodology which support your own project. This is of great importance in the dissertation, where this section sums up Chapter Two and provides a transition into Chapter Three.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Every research paper, including the dissertation, has a section describing how the researcher actually carried out the study itself. Of course, in Chapter One you have already described your basic research design and your research questions, and in Chapter Two you showed your theoretical framework, how you developed your topic, the need for the study, the research question, and all the design elements by analyzing the related literature in your field. Now in Chapter Three, you will describe step-by-step the methods and procedures used in your study in a way that will enable future researchers to replicate your study. In fact, make this a working principle to follow in writing Chapter Three: Describe your steps clearly enough that a reader could follow them like a recipe and reasonably repeat what you did. A key skill that will help you is to read your work with the mind of a stranger; this will highlight details that you may have forgotten to describe.

Some of the sections in Chapter Three mirror sections in Chapter One. Do not simply copy and paste your text from Chapter One here. Instead, rewrite them with a new emphasis. In Chapter One, you focused on the nature of your study. For instance, your focus in Chapter One on the research question was how it fit with the need for the study and its significance and how your study met the need. Chapter One is a conceptual and introductory presentation. Here in Chapter Three, your emphasis is on methods and procedures, so when you discuss the research question, you will focus on the kinds of data the question requires for its answer, among other things, and how your procedures are designed to collect and analyze those kinds of data. While the actual wording of the research question should be the same, the surrounding discussion will vary in emphasis.

In shorthand, Chapter One describes why the research question was asked, and Chapter Three describes how the research question was answered.

Chapter Three has, at least, the following elements: 1) the purpose of the study; 2) the research question; 3) the research design; 4) the target population and participant selection; 5) the procedures you used to conduct the study; 6) the instruments used to collect the data; and 8) ethical considerations. The final section of Chapter Three is the chapter summary.

Before beginning with the first section, “Purpose of the Study,” write an introduction to Chapter Three that identifies the main content you will be covering.

Purpose of the Study

This section re-presents in a more abbreviated fashion the information given in the opening sections of Chapter One: need for the study, any background relevant to the methods, the research question, and what the study is meant to accomplish--that is its purpose. The objective is to reorient the readers so that the methods to be described here will make sense.

Pay attention to two things:

- First, remember to make the distinction between the wider community need for the study and the more discipline-specific need for the study. Some studies explicitly propose to contribute to addressing the wider need for the study in some way. More often, the purpose contributes to a larger issue indirectly, or only to a certain degree, by addressing the need for the study. It is important to be clear about what your data and findings are capable of, and what you designed your study actually to do.
The second thing to pay attention to in writing this section is scholarly modesty. As in everything, claim for your results only what they actually can support, and be satisfied with a well-stated purpose even if it is not grand. Not many dissertations provide the final solution to a vexing issue. Most, indeed, are modest achievements, advancing the knowledge in the learner’s chosen area one useful and important step in what usually is a very long road. In writing your study’s purpose, focus on addressing the need for the study and (if the study can do it) helping to address the general issue; but don’t claim more than it actually can do.

In this section, although you do want to cover what you have earlier said in Chapter One, you should not merely copy-and-paste relevant passages. Rewrite them, usually in greater detail. The key principle is to write such that readers will be prepared both to critique the methods and if desired, to be able to repeat them. However, without contradicting the above principle, repeat verbatim important and recurring technical terms (such as the phenomenon and constructs), relevant formulations (such as key descriptors or the names of your main theoretical framework concepts), or frequently-used “code phrases” which quickly tell your readers what you are referring to (such as referring to your study as a “qualitative phenomenological study”). Keep all key terms consistent so your readers always know exactly what you are referring to.

It is perfectly legitimate to paraphrase a previous passage very closely. As always in scholarly writing, guide your readers to the original material in case they want to review it. Whenever borrowing from an earlier passage, refer back to the place from which you are borrowing. Conventional APA in-text citation (author, year and a later reference) is not used for this, because the earlier passage (your earlier chapter) is not yet published material. For example, it is acceptable to write, “As described previously (see pp. 9-11), the design of this study will be . . . “; or you might write something like, “Pages 9-11 in Chapter One described the design of the study. Here, that material will be repeated but with significantly more detail.” How you actually reference the earlier material is up to you, as always, but help your readers by reminding them where the original material comes from.

Research Question

For this section, simply repeat the open-ended research question (or questions) exactly as you have it in Chapter One. (If you had more than one research question, the section heading should be plural: “Research Questions.” If you had subquestions, create a separate section with that subheading.

Research Design

Like the previous section, you already outlined this in Chapter One from a conceptual standpoint. Here you can rewrite much of that material for the readers’ convenience, adding in greater clarity and detail, but your focus must be a concrete description of your design. In this section, you want your reader to have a clear idea of how your design was used to answer the research question(s).

*Note: School of Education learners should include the guide (e.g., text book, monograph, peer-reviewed journal article) that they are following.

Target Population and Sample

In this section, again, you will expand on information presented more cursorily in Chapter One. Before getting into details, please refresh your memory about the differences between the population and the sample. For this discussion, we’re going to use the terms loosely. Statisticians use the terms to refer to groups of data, not people because we work with and
analyze data, not actual persons. But because the data refer back to people, more loosely the terms often refer to the people from whom the data (numbers in the statistical world) come from. In that sense, the population is the larger group of people who experience the general problem or issue that generates the need for the study.

This section should have the following sub-headings: “Population” and “Sample.” Remember to include a paragraph between the “Target Population and Participant Selection” heading and “Population” heading that introduces the reader to the larger section and its contents. For a qualitative case study define the bounded system.

**Population**

In qualitative work, describing the population is often less important than the actual phenomenon or issue being investigated. However, if a population for your study exists (rather than “all human beings who experience this phenomenon”), its characteristic features should be described. Obviously, in qualitative analysis, you will not describe population parameters.

**Sample**

Next, describe the sample, consistently with the description of the population. This means simply that the researcher specifies the features of the sample that reflect the larger population. Representativeness is a key issue, especially in quantitative work, but sometimes also in qualitative studies. If you utilized a sampling frame for your research, you must describe it in this section. Identify the range of the number of participants you planned to include in the research and provide a rationale for the range. The acceptable rationale must include reference to the need for the study and question, showing that the sample size will provide an adequate depth of information to answer that question meaningfully. Support your rationale with sources from the methodological literature.

Carefully describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria for your sample. Note that exclusion criteria are not merely the “opposite” of inclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria are those characteristics that would disqualify and otherwise qualified person from participating.

Do not describe the actual obtained sample in this section. For example, you do not want to report your obtained sample size, how many males and females you had, and so on. The actual description of your obtained sample is presented in Chapter Four.

For researchers needing more information on describing the population and sample in this chapter, see Appendix B.

**Procedures**

The terms methods and procedures mean different things. Methods mean the general term describing what you will do to accomplish the task at hand. Procedures, on the other hand, are step-by-step descriptions of how the methods will be carried out.

The procedures section describes the procedures that were used to carry out all the major methods of the study. Usually, the methods are clustered in these main groups: methods of sampling; methods of ensuring the protection of the participants and their rights; methods of data collection; methods of data analysis; methods of presentation of the findings. Each of these groups of methods has procedures for implementation and should be presented under separate headings in this section. Make sure to provide an introductory paragraph to the Procedures section before presenting the first heading, “Participant Selection.” Subsequent headings are “Protection of Participants,” “Data Collection,” “Data Analysis,” and “Presentation of the Findings.”
Participant Selection

Before moving ahead, let’s be clear about the distinction between “methods” and “procedures.” Purposive (purposeful) sampling would be a method. In describing how you plan to carry out that method, you describe your procedures. So simply saying that you will obtain a sample by doing “snowball sampling” still requires you to describe what steps you will take to accomplish that.

In this section, identify the sampling method and describe the procedure of how you selected the sample. Include your steps taken for recruitment of participants. Use standard terminology throughout the dissertation, and be consistent. Be sure your terminology is congruent with your methodology and approach. If you used a non-conventional technique or procedure, in this section you should detail it and discuss the rationale and how the procedure or technique is consistent with your research question and design (with references to support the technique).

After describing your method of sampling, describe your procedures for carrying that method out. Describe carefully all the steps you took to create your sample. Each procedure—identifying potential participants, contacting that pool, recruiting or inviting their participation, and organizing your sample—requires its own procedural description (a recipe clear enough that others can reasonably repeat your work). In this section, “organizing the sample” includes a variety of steps, including how the inclusion and exclusion variables or criteria were measured or identified. Even in small-sample qualitative studies, these points must be covered carefully. Indeed, in qualitative studies, these procedures can become deceptively complex.

Some of the details that must be included in this section are the recruitment site (de-identified to protect participant confidentiality), how potential participants contacted you to indicate their willingness to participate, how the participants were screened to make sure they met the inclusion criteria, but not exclusion criteria, and how you proceeded once eligibility was determined. The sampling procedure ends once the participant provides informed consent.

Protection of Participants

In this section, describe the procedures used to protect the participants, such as how informed consent was obtained, whether there might have been safeguards in place in case of re-traumatization or to protect vulnerable populations and so on. You should not include your informed consent document or other similar documents as Appendices in your dissertation.

Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:

Expert Review

Before your actual data collection began, you may have had an expert review of your interview questions. If there was an expert review, describe the process, such as the number of reviewers, their (de-identified) credentials, and the general feedback the reviewers gave. Ultimately, include a statement that indicates that the expert reviewers approved the interview questions.

Data Collection

Data collection typically begins once informed consent has been given. Describe in detail what participants did in order to participate in the study. Where were they? In what order did things happen? About how long did it take? You might try putting yourself in a participant’s place and ask yourself what you would do as a participant in your study. The detail in this section should be such that another researcher could reasonably replicate your
study. This section should also include descriptions of how you stored and protected the data, as well as your plans for destroying the data in the future.

**Data Analysis**

This section describes the procedures you used to analyze your data. Do not report your data in this section. You will do this in Chapter Four. This section describes how you analyzed the data, and Chapter Four describes the findings as a result of the data analysis.

Qualitative analysis follows well-described steps, and the type of data being analyzed determines the kinds of analysis that are done. Therefore, the first thing to discuss in this section is the type(s) of data that were obtained. Interviews yield a kind of data different from field observations, photograph or videotape analysis, archived record data, journals, poems or novels, letters, historical documents, cultural artifacts, and so on. Different data types may require different analysis methods and procedures.

Next, discuss how the data were prepared for analysis. For example, an interview audiotape needs to be transcribed to be usable. How was it done (onto electronic media or paper) and who did it (the researcher often does his or her own transcriptions as a way to enter fully into understanding the data, but perhaps a transcriber did it)? Did the researcher keep master copies or not? Will there be working copies? How many? Was software (e.g., word processing programs or commercially available qualitative analytic programs) used? What versions? Include member checking procedures in the analysis section as well.

Next, discuss how the data will be initially analyzed. Again, each type of data and each methodological approach (e.g., ethnography, generic qualitative research, case study, grounded theory, phenomenology and heuristics) and each model (e.g., Giorgi’s methodological model of phenomenological research, Fetterman’s methodological model of ethnography research, Percy, Kostere and Kostere’s model of generic qualitative research, etc.) will have standard procedures recommended for data analysis (see Qualitative Research Approaches in Psychology (Percy, Kostere and Kostere) available in the iGuide). Information used to present qualitative methodology must be referenced to primary sources.

When there are multiple data types, describe not only the procedures (step by step) for analyzing each type of data, but the procedures for combining the results from each separate analysis.

When you have finished these descriptions, read them with a skeptical eye: do they give enough detail that your reader could follow your steps like a recipe? Try to leave nothing for your readers to guess at.

**Instruments**

**General Structure of “Instruments” Section**

This section features any instruments you will use to collect data of any kind. For its purposes, consider the term instrument broadly. In many forms of qualitative inquiry, the researcher is considered an instrument, because the researcher is the data collector par excellence. Likewise, in some studies, there will be actual instruments (cameras, tape recording devices, biofeedback equipment, and the like) collecting data. Make a list of each and every instrument (including yourself) that you will use in the collection of data.
The Role of the Researcher

While qualitative studies can use various instruments to assist with data collection, such as audio recorders, the primary instrument is the researcher. What about the case of the self of the researcher? This should be discussed in a sub-section titled “Role of the Researcher.”

Your “personal interactions as data collection instruments” would include such methods as interviews; open-ended conversation; focus group interviews; field notes, naturalistic, or participant observations; and so on. In these cases, the role of the researcher includes, at least, the following information: (a) what did the researcher actually do with the participants? (b) how was the researcher qualified by experience, training and supervision, or study to do those things? and (c), if the researcher was unqualified or under-qualified, what did he or she do to obtain the necessary skills?

For instance, if you conducted personal interviews, you need to describe how you were qualified to do such interviewing. Describe your experience doing so, the training or supervised practice you have received in doing so in preparation for this research, books or articles on techniques you have studied or trainings you have attended, and so on. Often your previous work training will contain such experience, but analyze your experience critically to be sure.

If the design of your study requires you to return to the participants (to validate initial interpretations of the data, for instance, or for a second round of interviews), describe any new instruments or “role of the researcher” which will be required for that round.

A second issue for qualitative researchers to cover (here or in the Procedures section) involves the question of researcher bias and previous knowledge. You should identify the previous knowledge you have about the question you are studying and any biases or expectations you had about what you would learn from your participants. Then you need to discuss your procedures for suspending (bracketing or epoché in phenomenology) the biases. This requires familiarity with the methodological literature associated with your chosen methodological approach (ethnography, case study, phenomenology, or grounded theory) and methodological model (published approach to the particular approach, such as Moustakas’ model of transcendental phenomenological analysis). Citing textbooks is insufficient preparation for this, when citing references cite primary sources.

Guiding Interview Questions

List your guiding interview questions, if you used them.

*Note: Put any protocols (for observations or artifact collection and analysis) in Appendices.

Ethical Considerations

In this section, discuss the ethical considerations you addressed in your study. You can mention the procedures you covered in the Protection of Participants section earlier in the chapter, but here explain fully why you might have taken certain steps. For example, if your sample was considered to be vulnerable, explain why you chose certain safeguards to protect your sample. If you had any conflicts of interest, disclose those in this section and explain what you did to mitigate those. In this section, indicate that your dissertation research received approval from the Capella University IRB, as well as any other IRBs or agencies that might have approved your study.

Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity: https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf

Summary

Summarize the main points of Chapter Three and provide a transition to Chapter Four.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Every research paper, including the dissertation, has a section describing the results of the data analysis and a presentation of the data collected and analyzed and the findings and results of the study. Chapter Four describes the results of your study, a presentation of the data collected, a presentation of the results of the data analysis and the findings of the study. Chapter Four has, at least, the following elements: the study and the researcher; description of the sample; a brief description of how the methodological approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, etc.) was applied to the process of data analysis; the presentation of data and results; and a summary.

Readers will note that the text here is written to reflect an outline of Chapter Four of the dissertation. Since this Chapter represents the research that has been conducted, Chapter Four should be written in past tense.

Introduction: The Study and the Researcher

In this section of Chapter Four, the researcher should provide the reader with a brief introduction stating the purpose of the chapter, a description of how Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation, and the organization or main sections of the chapter. This introduction should set the stage for the remainder of the chapter, as well as allow the reader to gain an understanding of the logical flow of how this chapter relates to both the preceding chapters and the following chapter. Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key issue to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.

The second sub-section of Chapter Four is critically important. Here, you will describe your role in the project. Why did you become interested in the topic and what is your personal stake in it? What motivated you to investigate this particular topic? What background did you bring to the project that both strengthens your vision of it and, conversely, interferes with your objectivity? What training and experience have you had in preparation for the project – in understanding the methodological approach itself, in the model you chose, in the data collection protocols and procedures, and in the data analysis procedures? Finally, what personal aspects do you bring to the study which may have an influence on what you learn?

Description of the Sample

This section of Chapter Four consists of a detailed description of the participant sample actually used in the study. The description of the sample should include demographic information about all the participants in the study. In qualitative research, because generalization is seldom the objective, the description of the actual participants is more important than a general description of a group. Be certain to include all information regarding the participants that is pertinent to the study itself. While most descriptions of the participants will include such information as age, gender, ethnicity, educational status, and area of residence, some studies—due to the nature of the research question—might include additional information. Enough detail about the participants must be described to answer the research question.

It is important while offering the reader a detailed description of the sample, to also carefully maintain the confidentiality and to conceal the identities of the participants in the study. It is essential that the participants not be identifiable by any individual reading the manuscript. Be careful not to allow details of setting or context identify any of the participants. For example, describing an interviewee as "a professor of psychology at a local..." is important.
university” could potentially identify the participant if the meaning of “local” became known somehow and if there were only one psychology department in that locality. In contrast, information that the participant is a “tenured professor in a small Midwestern liberal arts college,” if it is very important in understanding the results, would not unduly risk revealing the participant’s identity because there are many “small Midwestern liberal arts colleges.”

**Resource**
Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity: [https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf](https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf)

This section also should describe, along with the sample participants, other participants or near-participants who for any reason withdrew or were withdrawn from the study, along with the reasons for their withdrawal. Such information bears on the meaning of the data found, and can be discussed for its implications in Chapter Five. For example, in a phenomenological study with 15 participants, if three withdrew during the data collection period, the reasons for their withdrawal might bear directly upon the interpretation of the results.

Finally, describe any other aspects of or influences on the sample participants and their participation that might bear on the findings. These could include, for example, interrupted interviews, deviations from the planned interactions with the participants, happenings in the context or setting which bear on the findings (e.g., an unexpected lay-off occurring in a factory during field observations of a work group were being made), and so on. Reflect carefully on any and all factors that could have influenced what was discovered about your participants and report it here.

**Protection of Participants**
In this section, describe the procedures used to protect the participants, such as how informed consent was obtained, whether there might have been safeguards in place in case of re-traumatization or to protect vulnerable populations and so on.

**Resource**
Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity: [https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf](https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf)

**Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis**
In this section of Chapter Four, provide a description of how the methodological approach was applied to the process of data analysis and how the data analysis was conducted. Chapter Three presented the reader with a thorough description of the research design and methodological approach; it should not be repeated here. Instead, focus on how the analytic methods of the selected methodological approach (ethnography, phenomenology, etc.) were applied to the raw data. For example, if the study’s methodological approach was phenomenological (1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), this section discusses the actual steps of the actual analysis. It should reference any particular model of analysis within that framework, such as the phenomenological models of Giorgi (1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003) or Moustakas (1994). However, in this section, the aim is not to discuss the model (that was done conceptually in Chapters One and Two and methodological in Chapter Three), but to describe the analysis procedures briefly but clearly.

Discuss how the steps of the protocol were actually carried out. In actually performing the analysis, were there differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three? What were they and why did the researcher make those changes?

Finally, if any problems arose during data analysis, these should be described here; for example, if data were lost or somehow contaminated, those events and processes would be described here, including any attempts to correct the problem, reconstruct the data, re-collect them, etc. In Chapter Five, these issues can be analyzed and discussed for their
implications about the findings.

**Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis**

Following the discussion of how the data were analyzed, the researcher presents the data collected and the results of the analysis. This section is the heart of Chapter Four, and will be presented in a format consistent with the methodological approach chosen for the study. The summary outline above can be consulted for a conventional structure for data and results presentations in the major qualitative approaches. Build this section according to the appropriate format above, or according to data presentation models found in similar qualitative dissertations on similar research problems.

For example, in an ethnographic study, the analysis and results are presented in terms of patterns, themes, synthesis, and synthetic life histories. In the case study approach, data and findings are presented in terms of a description of the case as a whole, followed by the technical operations of direct interpretation, categorical aggregation, within-case analysis, across case analysis, and finally the interpretive phase. Grounded theory studies present their data and findings in terms of open coding, axial coding, selective coding, the conditional/consequential matrix, all leading to a description of the propositions or hypotheses of the proposed theory. Studies using Giorgi’s phenomenological model present their data in terms of the sense of the whole, development of meaning units, transformation of the meaning units into psychological descriptions, imaginative variation leading to structural description, and holistic description of the textural/structural features of the phenomenon. Finally, heuristics presents its data and results in terms of patterns, themes, creative synthesis, and finally descriptive portraits.

In this section, data and findings should be presented clearly, but with sufficient detail to allow readers to follow the analysis and to refer back to the raw data (words of the participants, field notes, etc.) to find support for the findings. The description should be rich and detailed. Whenever possible, give examples in the words of the participants to support a finding. It is not necessary or appropriate to provide every word from every participant. The researcher’s duty is to “digest” the raw data and to present them in a form that gives readers access to the results without their having to read all the data themselves. At the same time, the researcher finds representative quotations which “sum up” or exemplify the theme or pattern discovered across many responses. Each quotation should support a particular result or finding. Every quotation should be clearly related to one or more findings of a theme or pattern, and should represent other responses which may not be quoted. In that sense, while being unique units of data themselves, the quotations in Chapter Four also serve as exemplars of a set of data (other words, phrases, sentences, or passages) which can be found in the transcripts, notes, and other forms of raw data.

There are two widely-used methods of organizing this presentation of the analysis: the research-question method of organization and the by-participant method. Others can be equally useful, and researchers may use organizational models found in previously published studies of a similar nature. The “research-method” question organizes this section in large sub-sections devoted to each of the research sub-questions. The “by-participant” organizational model reports the various stages of analysis for each participant, before abstracting and reporting on the wider, more universal themes, structures, or universal issues found across all the participants’ data. Both presentations must set the stage for a clear set of answers to the research question, which will be summarized in the final section of Chapter Four.

All qualitative approaches build their results from the intensely particular (words, observations, field notes) toward the general (descriptions of patterns or themes found across many instances of the particular data). In performing the analysis, this inductive process is followed, moving again from the data themselves up to higher and higher levels of clusters of similar statements, to thematic abstractions from those clusters, up yet further toward interpretation statements abstracting a central meaning of a cluster of themes or patterns. In this section (presentation of the data and results), however, just the
opposite is conventionally found: the researcher reports the general themes or patterns of meaning found in the data, supported by representative quotations showing the more abstract theme. Again, not all the possible quotations from transcripts or field notes supporting a particular theme are presented; only the few that best exemplify the sense of that particular theme. Nor does the entire mass of raw data (transcripts, etc.) need to be appended to the dissertation. Instead, many authors create tables of themes and representative quotations for each theme and attach those as appendixes. Consult with your mentor and Committee members on the inclusion of mass data, tables, etc.

Chapter Four reports the process of abstraction—moving from the particulars of the data upwards toward themes, patterns of themes, and abstract meaning-statements. This is a process of interpretation. In Chapter Four, interpretations of the data are presented, aimed ultimately at answering the research question. Thus, in ethnographic presentations of results, a life history or set of life histories may be presented as a synthesis of the interpretations of data. This life history is not necessarily that of a single representative person, although it could be (although seldom does a single individual truly represent a cultural group). Rather, the life history may be a composite of a fictional character whose characteristics sum up what has been learned about the culture. Similarly, in the other approaches, the last stage of the analysis ("lessons learned" in case studies, "hypotheses" or "propositions" in grounded theory, "universal essences or structures" in phenomenology, etc.) represents the final interpretation of one’s data.

The results presented in Chapter Four (which include interpretations of the meaning of the data) will themselves be interpreted in Chapter Five by being related to issues raised in other authors’ work. For this reason, Chapter Four goes no further than presenting the sample, the analysis, and the results of the analysis in the form of answers to the research question. It remains for the researcher in Chapter Five, to put the overall study and those answers into the larger context of the wider body of literature on the topic. Thus, the presentation of the Results should focus only on answering the research question(s). Themes, patterns, and descriptions of the results should be presented in the context of the research question and sub-questions. A collection of themes and meanings found in the data which cannot rationally be connected to the research question(s) is meaningless, no matter how interesting it might be, and should be left out. The researcher’s creativity in presenting the data and the results is welcome; but the objective is always to present a clear and coherent answer to the research question, supported by the analysis and interpretation of the data. Likewise, no answer to the research question(s) should be offered unless it is clearly based on the analysis, and unless supporting data can be presented.

**Summary**

Present a summary of the findings or conclusions. In short, sum up the answers to the research question and sub-questions here, in such a way that the reader can smoothly make the transition to the full discussion of the meaning of the answers in the context of previous research as well as this study’s design in Chapter Five.

Like any summary, this should be brief and recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. It should not introduce anything new, add anything to the previous material, speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results: all this is the task of Chapter Five. Rather, tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.
Description of Qualitative Approaches

NOTE: Not all approaches described here are used in all schools. Check your school’s “Acceptable Methods” document on iGuide.

Choose the approach that you used in your dissertation.

ETHNOGRAPHY

The Study and the Researcher
See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:
1. The chapter’s purpose,
2. Its organization, and
3. How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

1. Ethnographic studies may also include a brief description of the background of the study and what preparations were made to enter the field.
2. A brief restatement of the research question (and any sub-questions) is also appropriate.

After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:

1. The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
2. The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
3. The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
4. A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

Description of the Sample

See the text in the general section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

1. This section gives a detailed description of the participant sample actually used in the study, including demographic information. Usually, such information as age, gender, ethnicity, educational status, and area of residence are important, and some studies include additional information. Enough detail about the participants must be described to answer the research question.
2. This section also should other participants or near-participants who withdrew or were withdrawn from the study, along with the reasons for their withdrawal. Finally, describe any other aspects of or influences on the sample participants and their participation that might bear on the findings.
3. Ethnographic studies also include descriptions of the communities, settings, locations, etc. in which observations were done, or other forms of data were collected.
Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

See the text in the general section Research Method and Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section in ethnographic studies provides the following information:

1. Describes how the ethnographic approach was applied to the process of data analysis. (Focus on how the analytic methods of ethnography were applied to the raw data.)
2. Describes any differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three.
3. Describes any problems arising during data collection or analysis.

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

See the text in the general section Presentation and Analysis of the Data, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

Ethnographic analysis begins with the raw data (which is not usually presented here; it may be summarized in appendixes) and completes the following steps, reported here:

1. Patterns of experience (recurring words, phrases, descriptions, etc.) are reported that are found in the data. These patterns form the first level of thematic analysis and are derived from and supported by direct quotes and first person passages that correspond to each identified pattern.
2. Next, the listing of patterns is clustered in more abstract themes of related patterns.
3. Then, a synthesis of themes constitutes a comprehensive representation of the element of the culture that is being investigated.
4. At the last stage, the research describes “life histories,” “life stories,” “culture stories,” or “organization stories” -- representative or exemplary participants in the culture, group, or organization. This highest level of abstraction does not show actual individual’s stories, but highly representative composite stories. If one individual very powerfully represents the synthesis of themes and patterns found across the cultural group, that individual’s story may be presented as exemplary.

Summary

See the text in the general section Summary, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In this section, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question and sub-questions, here, so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.
2. Briefly recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.
See these sources for more information on the ethnography approach:


### GROUNDED THEORY

#### The Study and the Researcher

See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:

- The chapter’s purpose,
- Its organization, and
- How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

Grounded theory studies may also include a brief restatement of the research question (and any sub-question).

- After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:
  - The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
  - The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
  - The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
  - A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

#### Description of the Sample

See the text in the Section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section for grounded theory studies will describe the following:

1. The primary informants (participants); include full descriptions of them, as well as demographic information, size of the final sample, and so on.
2. Any other data sources that were accessed, including descriptions of external informants, data bases, records, documents, and any other source of information.
3. Any participants who dropped from the study and why, as well as any other relevant data sources which could not be accessed and why.

#### Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:
In addition to describing the primary informants (participants), in this Section, grounded theory studies should describe:

1. The procedures or processes by which the data were collected from participants; this includes such issues as
2. How often they were interviewed or otherwise observed,
3. The role they played in interpreting or confirming the researcher’s interpretation of the data,
4. Any other characteristics of the sample or the researcher’s interactions with the participants that bear on the study.

**Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis**

See the text in the Section Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section in grounded theory studies provides the following information:

1. Describes how the grounded theory approach was applied to the process of data analysis. (Focus on how the analytic methods of grounded theory were applied to the raw data.)
2. Describes any differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three.
3. Describes any problems arising during data collection or analysis.

**Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis (Corbin and Strauss)**

See the text in the Section Data Presentation and Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

Grounded theory typically moves through three sequential phases of analysis, followed by the generation of theory or hypotheses. In this section, the researcher provides information about the following sequence:

In the first stage of analysis, the results of the three sequential coding exercises are reported:

1. First, the results of open coding are given,
2. Next, the results of axial coding are given.
3. Then the results of selective coding are described.
4. (At all stages, support for analyses in the form of words, images, descriptions from the actual data is presented supportively.) After the analysis (coding) results are presented:
5. The conditional/consequential matrix is presented.
6. Finally, the set of propositions or hypotheses (the theory) is described in light of the original research question.

**Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis (Charmaz)**

See the text in the Section Data Presentation and Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

A grounded theory typically moves through three sequential phases of analysis, followed by the generation of theory or hypotheses. In this section, the researcher provides information about the following sequence:
1. In the first stage of analysis, the results of the three sequential coding exercises are reported:
   a. First, the results of focused coding are given,
   b. Next, the results of axial coding are given.
   c. Then the results of theoretical coding are described.

(At all stages, support for analyses in the form of words, images, descriptions from the actual data is presented supportively.) After the analysis (coding) results are presented:

2. The conditional/consequential matrix is presented.
3. Finally, the set of propositions or hypotheses (the theory) is described in light of the original research question.

**Summary**

See the text in the general section Summary, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In this section, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question and sub-questions, here, so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.
2. Next briefly, recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.

See these sources for more information on the grounded theory approach.


**PHENOMENOLOGY**

*The Study and the Researcher*

See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:

1. The chapter’s purpose,
2. Its organization, and
3. How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

1. Phenomenological studies may also include a brief restatement of the research question.
2. After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:
3. The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
4. The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
5. The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
6. A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

**Description of the Sample**

See the text in the Section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section for phenomenological studies will describe the following:

1. The primary informants (participants); include full descriptions of them, as well as demographic information, size of the final sample, and so on.
2. Any other data sources that were accessed, including descriptions of external informants, data bases, records, documents, and any other source of information.
3. Any participants who dropped from the study and why, as well as any other relevant data sources which could not be accessed and why.

**Resource**

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:

**Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis**

See the text in the Section Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section in phenomenological studies provides the following information:

1. Describes how the phenomenological approach and any preferred model was applied to the process of data analysis. (Focus on how the analytic methods of phenomenology and one’s chosen model were applied to the raw data.)
2. Describes any differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three.
3. Describes any problems arising during data collection or analysis.

**Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis (Moustakas)**

(Use the procedures or steps appropriate to the methodological model you are following.)

Transcendental Phenomenology - There are three core processes that facilitate derivation of knowledge in the transcendental phenomenological approach as proposed by Clark Moustakas (1994). The three core processes are: Epoché, Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction, and Imaginative Variation.

Epoché: Setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence. It is returning to things themselves, free of prejudgments and preconceptions.

Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction: The task is that of describing in textual language just what one sees, not only in terms of the external object but also the internal act of consciousness, the experience as such, the rhythm and relationship between phenomenon and self. Textual qualities are as follows: rough and smooth; small and large; quiet and noisy; colorful and bland; hot and cold; stationary and moving; high and low; squeezed in and expansive, fearful and courageous; angry and calm – descriptions that
present varying intensities; ranges of shapes, sizes and special qualities; time references and colors within an experiential context.

Bracketing the Topic or Question – The focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question.

Horizonalizaton – Every statement is treated as having equal value.

Statements irrelevant to the topic or question as well as those that are repetitive or overlapping are deleted, leaving only the Horizons (the textual meaning and invariant constituents of the phenomenon)

Delimiting Horizons or Meanings: Horizons that stand out as invariant qualities of the experience.

Invariant Qualities and Themes – Non-repetitive, non-overlapping constituents are clustered into themes.

Individual Textual Descriptions – Develop integration, descriptively, of the invariant textural constituents and themes of each research participant.

Composite Textual Description – Develop integration of all of the individual textual descriptions into a group or universal textual description.

Imaginative Variation: The task of Imaginative Variation is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions roles, or functions. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of an experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced; in other words, the “how” that speaks to conditions that illuminate the “what” of experience. How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is? The steps to Imaginative Variation are as follows:

Systematic varying of the possible structural meanings that underlie the textural meanings. Vary perspectives of the phenomenon from different vantage points, such as opposite meanings and various roles. Using free fantasy variations, consider freely the possible structural qualities or dynamics that evoke structural qualities.

Construct a list of the structural qualities of the experience.

Recognizing the underlying themes or contexts that account for emergence of the phenomenon.

Develop structural themes by clustering the structural qualities into themes.

Considering the universal structures that precipitate feelings and thoughts with reference to the phenomenon, such as: time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others;

Individual Structural Descriptions: For each participant, integrate the structural qualities and themes into an individual structural description of the experience.

Composite Structural Description: Integration of all of the individual structural descriptions into a group or universal structural description of the experience.

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences: The final step in the phenomenological research process is the intuitive integration of the composite textual and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole. The essences of any experience are never totally exhausted. The fundamental textual-structural
synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon. (Adapted from Moustakas, 1994)

See the following source for more information on Moustakas' approach.  

Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis (Giorgi)

Use the procedures or steps appropriate to the methodological model you are following.

Empirical Phenomenology is a model of phenomenological psychological research that was developed at Duquesne University and Saybrook (Giorgi, 1985, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, Giorgi 2009).

There are two descriptive levels of the empirical phenomenological model:

1. Level 1, the original data is comprised of naïve descriptions obtained through open-ended questions and dialogue.

2. Level II, the researcher describes the structures of the experiences based on reflective analysis and interpretation of the research participant’s account or story.

The method of analysis consists of five essential steps which are as follows:

1. Sense of the Whole – One reads the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement.

2. Discrimination of Meaning Units Within a Psychological Perspective and Focused on the Phenomenon Being Researched – Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the text once more and delineates each time that a transition in meaning occurs with the specific aim of discriminating "meaning units" from within a psychological perspective and with a focus on the phenomenon being researched. The meaning unit should be made with psychological criteria in mind. The researcher next eliminates redundancies and clarifies and elaborates on the meaning of the units by relating them to each other and to the sense of the whole.

3. Transformation of Subjects Everyday Expressions into Psychological Language with Emphasis on the Phenomenon Being Investigated – Once meaning units have been delineated, the researcher goes through all of the meaning units, which are still expressed in the concrete language of the participants, reflects on them and comes up with the essence of the experience for the participant. The researcher next transforms each relevant unit into the language of psychological science. (textural)

4. Synthesis of Transformed Meaning Units into a Consistent Statement of the Structure of the Experience – Following the use of imaginative variation on these transformed meaning units the researcher develops a consistent statement regarding the structure of the participant's experience. (structural) (complete this process for each participant in the study)

5. Final Synthesis – Finally the researcher synthesizes all of the statements regarding each participant's experience into one consistent statement of the structure of the experience which describes and captures the essence of the experience being studied. (Adapted from Giorgi, 1985, 1997; 2009 Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003)
**Summary**

See the text in the general section Summary, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In this section, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question and sub-questions, here, so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.

2. Next briefly, recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.

For more information on Giorgi’s approach, see the following sources.


**HEURISTIC**

**The Study and the Researcher**

See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:

1. The chapter’s purpose,
2. Its organization, and
3. How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

4. A brief restatement of the research question is appropriate.
5. After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:
6. The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
7. The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
8. The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
9. A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

Description of the Sample
See the text in the Section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section for heuristic studies will describe the following:

1. The primary informants (participants); include full descriptions of them, as well as demographic information, size of the final sample, and so on. In heuristic studies, the co-researchers’ motivations, investment, reasons for participating, and similar information is important to describe fully.
2. Any other data sources that were accessed should be fully described.
3. Any participants who dropped from the study and why, as well as any other relevant data sources which could not be accessed and why.

Because the researcher is a co-participant and the participants are “co-researchers,” the researcher must also be described in the same manner as the co-researchers.

Resource
Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:

Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis
See the text in the Section Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section in heuristic studies provides the following information:

1. Describes how the heuristic phenomenological approach was applied to the process of data analysis. (Focus on how the analytic methods of heuristic research were applied to the raw data.)
2. Describes any differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three.
3. Describes any problems arising during data collection or analysis.

Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis
See the text in the Section Data Presentation and Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

Like phenomenological analysis, the movement in this presentation is from the particular to the general.

1. Begin by presenting a list of the patterns that emerged from the data analysis. Often, heuristic analyses start (like phenomenological analyses) with groups of meaning units or individual highly meaningful statements. If using this approach, it is preferable to attach an Appendix identifying the meaning units or statements. They should be numbered so they can be cross-referenced with the individual co-researchers.
2. Describe each pattern (approximately 2-3 paragraphs), supported by illustrative quotes taken from the data; each quote should further explicate each pattern.

3. Next, provide a listing of the themes that emerged from the data analysis along with a list of the patterns that exemplifies each theme. (Note: A theme is a more abstract statement of the underlying meaning of a cluster of patterns, and patterns, in turn, are abstract statements of the meanings of sayings or utterances by participants, including the researcher.) At this level, a common structuring outline would be:

Theme 1

- Pattern 1.1
  - Supporting utterances, sayings, text.
- Pattern 1.2
  - Supporting utterances, sayings, text.
- Pattern 1.3
  - Supporting utterances, sayings, text.

Theme 2

- Pattern 2.1
  - Supporting utterances, sayings, text.
- Pattern 2.2
  - Supporting utterances, sayings, text.

And so on.

4. After the listing and description of the themes, write a descriptive essence of each theme. In developing the descriptive essence, you may want to use direct quotes to both breathe life into the description and further elucidate the theme.

5. Next, creatively synthesize all the descriptive essences you have found, capturing the underlying essence of the topic/question under inquiry.

6. To conclude, paint two or three portraits of individual co-researchers’ experience of the topic/question under inquiry in such a way that the phenomenon and the person emerge as real. These should be both authentic derivations from the data as well as exemplifying generalizations.

**Summary**

See the text in the general section Summary, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In this section, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.

2. Next briefly, recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.

For more information on the heuristic approach, see the following sources.
QUALITATIVE CHAPTER GUIDES


GENERIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The Study and the Researcher

See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:

1. The chapter’s purpose,
2. Its organization, and
3. How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

1. Generic qualitative research studies may also include a brief restatement of the research question.
2. After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:
   3. The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
   4. The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
   5. The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
   6. A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

Description of the Sample

See the text in the Section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section for phenomenological studies will describe the following:

1. The primary informants (participants); include full descriptions of them, as well as demographic information, size of the final sample, and so on.
2. Any other data sources that were accessed, including descriptions of external informants, data bases, records, documents, and any other source of information.
3. Any participants who dropped from the study and why, as well as any other relevant data sources which could not be accessed and why.

Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity: https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf

Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis

See the text in the Section Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

This section in generic qualitative research studies provides the following information:
1. Describes how the Generic Qualitative research model was applied to the process of data analysis. (Focus on how the analytic method of generic qualitative research was applied to the raw data.)

2. Describes any differences or departures from the protocol described in Chapter Three.

3. Describes any problems arising during data collection or analysis.

**Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis**

Use the procedures or steps appropriate to the methodological model you are following.

**Inductive Analysis**

Inductive analysis is data driven and does not attempt to fit the data into any preexisting categories. The researcher sets aside all pre-understandings. The data collected from each participant (interviews, observations, open-ended questionnaire, etc.) is analyzed individually. Once the data from all participants has been analyzed, the repeating patterns and themes from all participants are synthesized together into a composite synthesis, which attempts to interpret the meanings and/or implications regarding the question under investigation.

**Step-By-Step Analysis**

1. Review and familiarize yourself with the data collected from each participant (interviews, journals, field notes, records, and documents). Read the documents and highlight intuitively any sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that appear to be meaningful. During this process, the researcher immerses him/herself in each participant’s data individually.

2. Review the highlighted data and use your research question to decide if the highlighted data is related to your question. Some information in the transcript may be interesting, but not relate to your question.

3. Eliminate all highlighted data that are not related to your question, however, start a separate file to store unrelated data. You may want to come back and reevaluate this data in the future.

4. Take each set of data and code or name the data.

5. Cluster the sets of data that are related or connected in some way and start to develop patterns.

6. Data that corresponds to a specific pattern is identified and placed with the corresponding pattern, and direct quotes are taken from the data (transcribed interviews, field notes, documents, etc.) to elucidate the pattern.

7. Take all the patterns and look for the emergence of overreaching themes. This process involves combining and clustering the related patterns into themes.

8. After all the data has been analyzed, arrange the themes to correspond with the supporting patterns. The patterns are used to elucidate the themes.

9. For each theme, the researcher needs to write a detailed analysis describing the scope and substance of each theme. (Complete this process for each participants’ data)

10. Each pattern should be described and elucidated by supporting quotes from the data.
11. Then combine the analysis of data for all participants including patterns and themes that are consistent across the participants’ data.

12. Finally, the data is synthesized together to form a composite synthesis of the question under inquiry. (Percy, Kostere, and Kostere, 2015)

**Summary**

In this section, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.

2. Next briefly, recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.

For more information on generic qualitative research, see the following sources.


**CASE STUDY**

*The Study and the Researcher*

See the text in the general The Study and the Researcher section, below, for what is common to all the approaches. Main items in all approaches include a brief statement of each of these points:

1. The chapter’s purpose,
2. Its organization, and
3. How Chapter Four fits into the overall dissertation.

(Information about the research design, methodological assumptions, or any other material covered previously in Chapters One, Two, or Three should not be included in this Introduction. The key thing to remember: this introduces Chapter Four, not the entire dissertation.)

4. Case studies may also include a brief description of the background of the study, the relevant contexts of the case, and what preparations were made to enter the field.

5. A brief re-statement of the research question is also appropriate.

After introducing the chapter, include a sub-section on the researcher, including at least the following information:
6. The researcher’s interest in the phenomenon to be investigated,
7. The researcher’s background, training, and experience in conducting the research approach,
8. The role the researcher played in data collection and analysis, and
9. A discussion of significant effects the researcher may have had on the data at any stage of the project.

**Description of the Sample**
See the text in the Section Description of the Sample, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

Section B for case studies will describe the following:

1. The primary informants (participants); include full descriptions of them, as well as demographic information, size of the final sample, and so on.
2. Any other data sources that were accessed, including descriptions of external informants, data bases, records, documents, and any other source of information.
3. Any participants who dropped from the study and why, as well as any other relevant data sources which could not be accessed and why.

**Resource**
Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity:

**Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis**
See the text in the Section Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches. In general, describe how the case study methodological approach was actually carried out in this study.

In Section C, case studies also describe:

1. What different data analysis tools and procedures were used for various kinds of data.
2. How context and setting were analyzed.
3. Problems with the analysis should also be outlined, although their impact will not be discussed here, but in Chapter Five section.

**Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis**
See the text in the Section Data Presentation and Analysis, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In a case study Section D, there should be six sub-sections, presenting gradually more-general findings (although at each level, the material presented should be supported by actual words, information, or other empirical material drawn from the case). The six levels are:

1. A detailed description of the case as a whole and of its setting(s) and contexts, creating a rich and textured picture of the case and its settings; this gives a sense of the whole;
2. Direct interpretation (of single instances): describe single instances which seem meaningful in light of the research question. Do not (yet) look for clusters of
meanings or multiple instances of one meaningful theme;

3. **Categorical aggregation**: At this stage, collections of meaning-rich instances from the data are aggregated into categories of meaning (themes);

4. **Within-case analysis**: Describe themes and patterns of meaning which emerged from the data and illustrate the connections between or among the themes. These themes and patterns should be described and developed using verbatim passages and direct quotes from the data to elucidate each pattern and theme. (The data from the case itself are used, without being compared yet with data from other cases; this is *within-case analysis*).

(Many case studies examine a number of instances [multiple cases]. If so, repeat the first four steps for each instance [case]. Then move to the final two steps. If only one instance [single case], proceed to steps 5 and 6.)

5. **Thematic synthesis**: Synthesize the results of the thematic analyses across multiple cases (*across case analysis*) or within the case using verbatim passages and direct quotes from the data to elucidate each theme as well as present the interpretations of the integrated meaning of all the cases in the study.

6. Develop and present naturalistic generalizations of the results of the interpretive phase of the study; these consist of the “lessons learned” from the case study.

*Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis Using Thematic Analysis for Case Study*

1. A thematic analysis can also be used to conduct an analysis of the qualitative data in some types of case study

2. Read the data transcript and underline any sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that appear to be meaningful. Do not make any interpretations yet!

3. Review the underlined data and decide if the underlined data is relevant to the research question. (Some information in the transcript may be interesting but does not relate to the research question)

4. Cross out all data that is not related to the research question.

5. From the underlined sentences that are left, following the elimination of data not related to the question, take each underlined sentence or groups of sentences (expressions or meaning units) that focus on one idea and name or code each.

6. Cluster the sets of data (expressions or meaning units) that are related or connected in some way and start to develop patterns. Now you start the interpretation, but only with the understanding that the codes or the patterns may shift and change during the process of analysis.

7. After you have developed your patterns, title (name) each pattern.

8. Write a brief description of each pattern. Use direct quotations from the transcript to show the reader how the patterns emerged from the data.

9. Take all the patterns and look for the emergence of overreaching themes. This process involves combining and clustering the related patterns into themes.

10. After all the data has been analyzed, arrange the themes to correspond with the supporting patterns. The patterns are used to elucidate the themes.

11. For each theme, the researcher needs to write a detailed analysis describing the scope and substance of each theme. (Complete this process for each participants’ data)
12. Each pattern should be described and elucidated by supporting quotes from the data. Then the research develops a synthesis of the participant’s data combining the patterns and themes to represent a whole of the experience under inquiry. (Within case analysis)

13. Then combine the analysis of data for all participants including patterns and themes that are consistent across the participants’ data. (Cross case analysis)

14. Finally, the data is synthesized together to form composite synthesis of the question under inquiry.

15. Develop a statement of the Lesson to be Learned.

Summary

See the text in the general section Summary, below, for what is common to all the approaches.

In Section E, the researcher has two tasks:

1. First, this section will sum up the answers to the research question and sub-questions, here, so the reader can smoothly transition to the discussion of what the findings mean in Chapter Five.

2. Next briefly recapitulate the main points of Chapter Four. Add nothing new to the previous material, do not speculate or theorize, draw conclusions, or reflect on the larger meaning of the results. Tell the reader what the answers to your research questions are and write a transition paragraph moving the readers along to Chapter Five, where the results will be discussed and interpreted.

For more information on the case study approach, please see the following sources.


CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

It is not unusual for learners to find that writing Chapter Five can be challenging. Having carefully avoided injecting speculation or reflection into the previous sections, and assiduously sticking to the previous research to support their claims, now they find they must become transparent as the author of their work. In Chapter Five, writers must evaluate their own work and provide personal insight into and interpretation of their study’s results. This does not mean, of course, that informal writing is now appropriate. But within the constraints of scholarly writing, the learner now presents what the study means to him or her, and more widely, what he or she thinks it means to their field, to the line of previous research, and to the communities interested in the topic. (Note: In APA style, avoid referring to yourself in 3rd person (e.g., “this researcher”). If you must refer to yourself, use 1st person singular. If possible, avoid referring to yourself at all. Passive voice is acceptable in scientific writing, when necessary. See p. 69 of your APA manual, and this blog regarding appropriate use of 1st person in APA style.

In general, however, Chapter Five must accomplish two primary objectives:

1. It should assess whether the dissertation addresses the need that precipitated the study (and how well); in doing so, the learner should interpret the study’s results in light of existing findings in the field.

2. It should recommend directions for future study.

To accomplish the first objective, Chapter Five addresses and discusses what the study means: Did the study answer the research question, and what are its implications for the research question, the previous literature, and the wider communities of interest? Whereas Chapter Four was limited to simply presenting the results, now the researcher must show how those results do or do not answer the research question and what they mean in its light.

The second objective is to make recommendations for future research. To do so, Chapter Five should discuss the design and methodological improvements that could strengthen the study (if it were replicated); what kinds of data might be collected to strengthen the results and their meaning; and new research questions or problems the results leave unfinished.

These two main objectives can be met by following the section outlines above, which will now be described in greater detail. Obviously, each researcher will have his or her own approach, and it is wise to consult with one’s mentor as to the final design of Chapter Five; but these sections will cover the main issues involved in the two primary objectives.

Like all such chapters in the dissertation, start with an introduction that precedes the first heading (“Summary of the Results” in this case) that introduces the chapter. The researcher should provide the reader with a brief introduction stating the purpose of the chapter, the organization or main sections of the chapter, and a description of how the chapter fits into the overall dissertation. This should set the stage for the remainder of the chapter, as well as giving the reader an understanding of the logical flow of the chapter’s main points and how it relates to the preceding chapters.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this section is to refresh the reader’s understanding of the overall study. It should

1. restate the need for the study
2. explain the study’s significance
3. very briefly indicate the literature reviewed (particularly new findings published while the dissertation was being completed)
4. the methodology used
5. a very concise recapitulation of the study’s findings.

Do not repeat the relevant sections from earlier chapters. Summarize concisely. Provide enough to refresh the reader’s understanding of the overall study, including the main points from the theoretical framework and the review of the previous research, then move on to the core of the Chapter, the sections to follow. The aim of this section is orientation of the reader to the overall findings in order to understand and critique the rest of the chapter.

Discussion of the Results

The key word here is “discussion.” In Chapter Four, the researcher simply presented the results. But now begins the researcher’s personal and professional interpretation of what those results mean. This section relates and interprets the results of the study to their initial hypotheses and research questions, illuminating the practical and theoretical implications and meanings of the study for the reader. There really are two interacting questions at play throughout Chapter Five: What does the study (and any component result) mean? And, why did it turn out like that?

This section interprets the results in light of the original research question; that is, an intra-study interpretation. How well do the results answer the research question or support those hypotheses? Can they be interpreted plausibly to provide a stronger answer, and if so, how? And why did the results turn out as they did?

Some dissertations turn out not to or only partially answer the research question. If this is the case, what does it mean in light of the original question? Are there other implications of the outcome? What might they be? And finally, what plausible research design or methodological explanations might account for the outcome?

This search for explanations of the results within the study itself will be complemented by the following section’s discussion of the relationship of the conclusions with the previous research and the wider fields of interest. Insofar as this section focuses inwardly, on the study itself, it also identifies the limitations of the study – its design flaws, problems, or other elements that the researcher finds had some impact on the results – but a fuller discussion of the limitations and delimitations can be saved for the “Limitations” section, below.

Conclusions Based on the Results

While the previous section, “Discussion of the Results” is an inward focus on interpreting the nuances of the dissertation study, the “Conclusions Based on the Results” section shifts focus outward toward the previous literature and the wider field of interest. What do the results mean for them? For example, if the study’s findings are not consistent with previous research, and if you did not turn up any intra-study flaws or design weaknesses to account for that, then perhaps the findings challenge previously-held beliefs. As such, its failure to support a hypothesis may be a very important finding indeed. This section is where the researcher teases out these meanings of the findings.
This section should present two sections with the following sub-headings: “Comparison of the Findings with the Theoretical Framework and Previous Literature,” and “Interpretation of the Findings.”

**Comparison of the Findings with the Theoretical Framework and Previous Literature**

The first sub-section should address how the findings fit in with the previous literature and the theoretical framework that you presented in Chapter Two. Is there agreement or disagreement, support or disconfirmation? What does it mean for the wider field of psychology, or for the community of interest who has the general problem outlined in the “Need for the Study” in Chapter One?

**Interpretation of the Findings**

Under the second sub-heading, explain why your study yielded the findings that it did. What is there in that previous literature of research or theory that accounts for the outcome as it is? What plausible explanations might there be?

This is the sort of reflection called for here in the heart of Chapter Five. Provide the reader with a clear discussion of what the outcomes of the study mean for the wider literature and community, and what might account for the outcomes. Explain how the findings fit in with the theoretical framework and research literature you reviewed in Chapter Two. Make sure to provide citations throughout as needed.

**Limitations**

Here the researcher more fully discusses design problems or limitations. The researcher should identify and discuss any design element that, with improvement, could significantly enhance the quality of the results without being unrealistic. (Certainly, any study would have better external validity if it sampled the entire population, but that is not usually realistic.) Here the emphasis should be not on covering every possible improvement or problem, but on reasonable improvements that will result in better future research and stronger results from similar studies.

Limitations do not include only the flaws and mistakes, although candidly discussing these is necessary. They also include good-enough elements that could realistically be made better. The fact that many dissertations are done on a limited budget and with severe time constraints usually leaves their authors with a wish-list of improvements; here is where those should be candidly and modestly discussed. No one expects perfection of any study, but the scientific community does expect researchers to be transparent about how they could improve their work. Here is where learners provide that transparency. As you discuss limitations of your study, be mindful of being overly harsh in your critique. You don’t want to leave the reader with the impression that the research was poorly conceived and conducted.

This section also covers known delimiters—things which your study did not intend to study, but might have shed some light on the issue or phenomenon your investigated. For example, perhaps you only studied a particular age group in your study; but by adding other age groups, you might have gained more understanding.

**Implications of the Study**

In this section, discuss the implications of the study’s findings in two contexts: the implications for theory and the knowledge base in your discipline, and the practical implications your research has for the wider community of stakeholders. In addressing the
implications for theory and knowledge, consider how the study deepened your discipline’s understanding of the phenomena and population/sample.

In describing the practical implications, discuss how your research might benefit or be used by professionals in your field, as well as those in related disciplines. Avoid the temptation to overstate the implications your research might have. Make sure to provide citations from the research literature that support your assertions.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Researchers can discuss as many as four categories of recommendations for further studies. Each category reflects back on one of the previous sections of the Chapter. The four most common categories of recommendations are:

- Recommendations developed directly from the data.
- Recommendations derived from methodological, research design, or other limitations of the study.
- Recommendations based on delimitations.
- Recommendations to investigate issues not supported by the data but relevant to the research problem.

**Recommendations developed directly from the data.**

These are the typical “recommendations for further study,” built directly on the results presented in Chapter Four and discussed above in “Discussion of the Results” and “Conclusions Based on the Results.” Most results raise as many questions as they answer, and here is where they are described. Very commonly, the results can call for the “next level” of investigation. These recommendations can also include recommendations for treatments or interventions supported by the data as well.

**Recommendations derived from methodological, research design, or other limitations of the study.**

Once again, these are typical and frequent. They build directly on the limitations described in the previous section.

**Recommendations based on delimitations.**

This category of recommendations for further research appears less often in dissertations, although it is important. Every researcher decides early in the process what important questions, issues, variables, or other facets of a topic he or she will leave out. The reasons for doing so are usually pragmatic, involving the availability of resources, time frames, and other practical considerations. Sometimes, important and interesting aspects of a problem are left out for sound theoretical reasons. All such omissions are “delimitations,” aspects of the subject that are important and meaningful, but that were intentionally not investigated for one reason or another.

It is not necessary or wise to try to include any and all such delimitations here. Rather, the researcher focuses on those offering the greatest chance of broadening or deepening our knowledge of the phenomenon.

Recommendations to investigate issues not supported by the data but relevant to the research problem.
This category in many respects resembles the recommendations based on delimitations, but is different in an important way: It recommends further work on issues that arose during the study, and that appear to be “serendipitous.” This is a judgment call. Is the “new” element sufficiently important, based on previous theory or research or in another theoretical frame, to call for its study based on insufficient data in this study? The researcher must weigh all the factors. Probably here is where the novice researcher must tread the most carefully, but also here is where he or she can have the biggest impact. Synthesizing two previously distant lines of thinking by means of such a recommendation is a very satisfying scientific achievement; if your study allows for it, take the opportunity to defend it to your committee.

**Conclusion**

This section should begin with a concise summary of the dissertation and then move on to overall conclusions. Note that conclusions are the ideas that you arrive at by considering the summary. Therefore, in this section, the writer sums up the dissertation, offers a final description (always concise, sometimes eloquent) of the answers to the research question, and provides closure to the manuscript as a whole. Here the writer may provide a rhetorical suggestion for how the study could be used in furthering our understanding of the problem dealt with. Some researchers in the conclusion exhibit a more lyrical and personal tone, but usually, this is discouraged in favor of consistency of tone.

Researchers should check with their mentors to learn the mentors’ preferences regarding personal statements of the meaning of the project to the researchers. Some permit this; some discourage it. If permitted, such statements of personal growth, reflections on lessons learned as a scholar-researcher, and descriptions of the impact of the dissertation on one’s professional growth can often provide a satisfying and scholarly final cadence to the dissertation. Again, however, maintain the scholarly tone and attitude that prevails throughout the dissertation.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are characteristics of an acceptable research question. Each is (a) a question that can be answered, (b) based on a literature review that has revealed that this is a research problem that needs investigation, (c) not yet satisfactorily answered, and (d) clearly identifies all the elements that the study will investigate: the phenomenon of interest, the population of interest, and the focus on their actual experiences (thoughts, feelings, etc.).

In a qualitative research question, words such as variables and relationship among variables do not easily apply. The basic principle in writing any good research question is to be sure that it includes the relevant variables or constructs and indicates their relationship. Qualitative analysis does not measure things, so variability-based definitions and operational definitions are not relevant to it. But phenomena or experiences (the stuff of most qualitative analysis) can be named conceptually, and the research question must ask about those conceptual constructs. Because qualitative research does not inquire into relationships between variables, words like "effects," "impact," "influence," and the like are seldom used.

In general, it is better to write a more narrowly focused question asking precisely what the researcher is interested in finding out. Although questions about “lived experience of X” are common, the construct “lived experience” is extremely broad and encompasses a wide range of conscious cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. If one’s interest is correspondingly broad, fine. But if one’s interest can be more clearly and narrowly focused, that is preferable.
APPENDIX B: POPULATIONS AND SAMPLES

Qualitative designs are not usually preoccupied with matters of external validity. Their purpose is different—to achieve rich and textured knowledge about people's experience of some phenomenon or issue. As a result, qualitative analysis focuses more narrowly and deeply on “information-rich” participants, rather than on a larger and broader sample representative of large populations. Nevertheless, the question of whether you want to generalize your findings to a larger population (and who that population might be) remains critical in designing qualitative studies. Any intent to generalize one's findings means that the sampling procedures must be designed as stringently as in quantitative studies.

Ethnographic studies (including methods designed to study culturally distinct groups) require that the sample truly represents the target population.

Grounded theory requires that the participants actually be representative of the issue that is being investigated.

Case studies, obviously, study cases which are rich in information about the case issue inquired about. Because a “case” is a “bounded system”, the case boundaries (identifying characteristics) need to be clearly specified in this section. Identifying a larger “target population” is typically unnecessary in a case study: by definition, a case study is interested in a particular case (or a number of instances of a particular case), not in the universe of possibly related cases.

Phenomenological studies typically focus on a phenomenon of human experience. The “population” would conceivably be all persons who experience the phenomenon. This fact may underlie the phenomenologists' emphasis—unique among the qualitative approaches—on finding textures and structures or patterns and themes of the phenomenon. For this reason, phenomenological researchers do not discuss populations too much. However, the participants in the sample must be chosen very carefully to ensure that they can describe their experience of the phenomenon.

All qualitative researchers wrestle with sample selection. On the one hand, they want information-rich participants who can report on their experiences. On the other hand, they need their sample to faithfully represent the underlying phenomena or issues or case or problem.

Resource

Refer to the Ethical and Legal Criteria for Population/Site Anonymity: https://assets.capella.edu/campus/doctoral-programs/DoctoralPublicationGuidelines.pdf