Examining the Potential of Combining the Methods of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Increasingly, qualitative researchers are combining methods, processes, and principles from two or more methodologies over the course of a research study. Critics charge that researchers adopting combined approaches place too little attention on the historical, epistemological, and theoretical aspects of the research design. Rather than discounting eclecticism in qualitative research, we prefer to place it on a continuum of integration whereby at the ideal end of the spectrum, the researcher demonstrates thorough knowledge of the approaches being drawn from and a thoughtful consideration of the rationale for combining methods. However, there is limited reflection in the literature on the combination of methods from specific methodological approaches. To address this gap we examine the extent to which the methods from two distinct qualitative methodologies, grounded theory and narrative inquiry might complement each other within a qualitative study using a framework that encompasses 10 key methodological features of research design.

Keywords

Grounded Theory, Combined Methodological Approaches, Narrative Inquiry, Mixed Methods, Qualitative, Multiple Methods

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Qualitative researchers are increasingly combining methods, principles, and processes from different methodologies in the course of a research study as opposed to operating strictly within a delineated qualitative tradition. Researchers who combine methods might do so at some or all stages of the research process, including data collection, data analysis, and representation of findings. In health-related research in particular, we have observed that this combined approach is often invoked under the pragmatic rationale of producing research that is better positioned to translate into practical domains (e.g., Seaton, 2005).

The combination of methods from different methodologies has been variously labeled qualitative mixed method design (Morse, 2010), multiple method design (Morse & Niehaus, 2009), multiple methodology (Seaton, 2005), non-categorical method of research (Thorne, Reimer Kirkham, & O'Flynn-Magee, 2004), interpretive description (Thorne et al., 2004), generic qualitative research (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003), and combined qualitative methodology (Swanson-Kauffman, 1986). While some researchers use these terms interchangeably, others (e.g., Morse, 2010) propose distinctions by applying particular meanings and practices to some of these terms.

In this article, we have adopted the term "combined methodological approach" to bring attention to the historical, theoretical, and philosophical aspects of methodologies from which researchers combine methods. It also refers to the act of combining research methods, processes, and principles commonly associated with different qualitative methodologies at some or all stages of the research process to address the objective(s) of a study. We distinguish the meaning between method and methodology as we contend that the limited distinctions researchers make between these two terms in the qualitative literature pose a problem. Denzin (2010) stated, "each qualitative method rests on different assumptions" (p. 422). Methodology can be situated at the interface between paradigm and method; it consists of a set of "skills, assumptions, and practices that the researcher employs as he or she moves from paradigm to the empirical world" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 25). Among the most recognized qualitative methodologies are: phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry. Examples of methods developed within these traditions include: bracketing, participant observation, constant comparative analysis, and narrative interviewing, respectively. When authors refer to the terms grounded theory and focus group as methods, attention is taken away from the historical, philosophical, theoretical, and methodological aspects that are associated with qualitative traditions such as grounded theory.

Critics caution that combined approaches can be problematic when limited attention is given to key considerations of the constituent methodologies. Caelli et al. (2003) observed that studies utilizing combined approaches are at times poorly anchored within an identifiable epistemological or theoretical perspective. They argued that under the pressure of time constraints, researchers turn toward the "less demanding option" (p. 3) of applying a combined approach because it is perceived as a way to avoid having to fully learn about any one established qualitative tradition. Moreover, those working from a purist paradigmatic and methodological perspective might not see, or agree with, the possibility for compatibility between, and combination of, qualitative traditions such as grounded theory and narrative inquiry. This might especially be the case if they understand these traditions to originate from two diverging paradigms (i.e., grounded theory in post-positivism and narrative inquiry in constructivism/constructionism/post-modernism) and disagree with the idea that methodologies can be 'moved' along the paradigmatic continuum.

Yet, despite these cautionary claims, it is impossible to ignore the increasing trend in the literature of researchers applying combined methodological approaches. In this regard, several examples can be found of studies that combine the use of both grounded theory and narrative inquiry (e.g., Bailey & Jackson, 2003, 2005; Cohn et al. 2009; Drew, 2007; Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010). Thus, rather than discount the possibilities of combining what may appear to be distinct and incompatible approaches to qualitative research, we feel it is important to examine this trend more thoughtfully. Like Seaton (2005), we contend that there is a need for "further dialogue and debate regarding the commensurability of interpretive methodologies, and their underlying epistemologies and philosophies, in multiple-methodology research" (p. 192). Moreover, we propose to place the integrity of combined approaches on the continuum of integration. At the ideal end of the spectrum, the researcher demonstrates thorough knowledge of the approaches being combined, thoughtful consideration of the rationale for combining methods, and a heuristic for how the methods will be combined. In part, we suggest that this necessitates

a comparative understanding of the constituent methodologies. Although there are instances in the literature in which comparisons of different qualitative traditions can be found (e.g., Creswell, 2007; Starks & Trinidad, 2007), these have been written with the objective of helping the reader to choose one qualitative methodology for a study over another, as opposed to combining methodologies.

The purpose of this article is to compare and contrast grounded theory and narrative inquiry to better understand the commensurability between these two approaches, why they might be combined in a study, and what might be some of the issues associated with combining these two approaches. Our comparative analysis compares the historical, theoretical, and philosophical aspects of these two traditions. The process and results of this analysis are intended to assist researchers in their reflection and decision making on choosing a combined methodological approach, develop and articulate rationales for combining methodologies, and ultimately to build coherent research designs. We conducted the comparative analysis of grounded theory and narrative inquiry using a framework that encompasses 10 key features of methodology: history, purpose, theoretical influences, paradigmatic considerations, researcher-phenomenon/process/participant relationships, sampling, data collection and analysis, criteria for quality appraisal, representation of findings, and critiques. We draw on well-respected methodological texts that are informed by empirical work and widely used by researchers; also, we incorporate peer-reviewed research from a broad range of disciplines to illustrate the comparative features of the analysis. We begin with an historical overview of each methodological approach.

Historical Development of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) development of grounded theory marked a radical shift toward the generation of theory through the systematic collection and analysis of data arising within a substantive area of interest. Glaser and Strauss differed from each other in terms of their paradigmatic backgrounds, rendering their collaboration uncharacteristic of the research era in which they were situated. Strauss, an established qualitative sociologist, was highly influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology and symbolic interactionism; Glaser had a quantitative background in descriptive statistics. Glaser joined Strauss' research on death and dying in the context of hospital care. Their ultimate objective was to contribute to better management of the dying process in terminal care environments. Their research questions could be summarized as follows: what kinds of interactions re-occur between dying patients and health care professionals, under what conditions, and with what social consequences (Glaser & Strauss, 1965)?

To achieve their research objective, Glaser and Strauss (1965) conducted intensive fieldwork in several terminal care environments through observations of interactions between health care professionals, patients and their family members, and also interviews with members of these groups. They discovered that the interaction between a hospital professional and a patient depended on the level of awareness each had regarding the patient's prognosis, which they referred to as an awareness context. They articulated a substantive theory concerning the phenomenon of awareness context in the seminal text, *Awareness of Dying* (1965), which produced a high demand for further specification of the methodological process that produced the theory. Glaser and

Strauss responded to this demand by writing *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), in which they articulated the rationale and methods of their new approach.

Since Glaser and Strauss' (1967) publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, several refinements to the grounded theory approach have been suggested (e.g., Clarke, 2005; Schatzman, 1991). One such example is dimensional analysis, articulated by Schatzman (1991). Schatzman, who was Strauss' first graduate student and later a colleague of Glaser and Strauss, taught research methods to sociology graduate students at the University of California (Bowers & Schatzman, 2009; Kools, McCarthy, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996; Schatzman, 1991). He co-authored a field research text with Strauss (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) and has been recognized by Strauss (1987) as a key contributor to the development of analytical approaches within grounded theory.

Over time, based on his observations while teaching graduate students, Schatzman concluded that the procedures articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) lacked an overall structure to sufficiently guide students in their analysis. He aspired to make the process of developing theory more accessible to graduate students (Bowers & Schatzman, 2009; Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Thus, he developed dimensional analysis, an approach that endeavours to prevent a premature and superficial identification of basic social processes embedded in data (Bowers & Schatzman, 2009) and instead facilitate the researcher's ability to elaborate on the complex nature of phenomena in terms of their various dimensional attributes (Schatzman, 1991). He advocated for the explicit use of matrices to provide structure and direction to explore the "parts, attributes, interconnections, context, processes, and implications" (p. 309) of a phenomenon.

Because of its interdisciplinary nature and historical roots, the lineage of narrative inquiry is more challenging to trace when compared to grounded theory. The theory and study of narratives has been of interest to several disciplines, including but not exclusive to "literary theory, history, anthropology, drama, art, film, theology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, education" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), literary criticism, phenomenology, and sociology. A review of the vast bodies of literature stemming from each of these disciplines in terms of their relevance to the development of narrative inquiry is beyond the scope of this article; however, we provide a sample of key authors and their works and acknowledge the possibility that some readers will perceive omissions in our review.

The interpretation of narratives can be traced as far back as 335 BC when Aristotle produced Poetics, which explored the purpose and structure of drama and poetry (Aristotle, 2008). It evolved through the early centuries A.D. within the discipline of theology and the practice of exegesis-interpretation of sacred texts and the development of hermeneutics. Narrative inquiry, in the form of life histories, first appeared in the work of researchers from the Chicago School of Sociology in the early part of the 20th century (Chase, 2005). During that time, with realist ontological perspectives still dominant, sociologists and anthropologists were interested in the "what" of the stories told, that is, content as direct representations of life experiences. The 1960s marked a significant turn in researchers' perspective and treatment of narratives. With ontological and epistemological shifts toward understanding the social construction of reality and how it can be known, other types of questions were explored. Researchers interrogated the stories of narrators, inquiring "how" stories are told (e.g., use of language), for "whom" stories are told, how interviewers influence what stories are told and how they are told,

and "why" stories are told (e.g., intentions of the narrator; Riessman, 2008). For example, literary critics such as Kermode (1967) brought attention to the process through which narrators attempt to make sense of life experiences. Using the examples of classifications based on apocalyptic thinking, Kermode illustrated how humans use fiction to impose an organization to their experience of time. Labov and Waletzky (1967) illuminated the relationship between structural elements of narratives and the functions they serve through their seminal sociolinguistic work conducted on 600 first-person accounts of violence.

In the 1980s, Ricoeur (1988), Bruner (1987), and Polkinghorne (1988) provided key theoretical, philosophical, and historical contributions on narrative (inquiry). Ricoeur produced numerous accounts on a range of topics relevant to the theory and study of narrative including hermeneutics, time, language, identity, discourse, and action. He examined narrative as a critical form of human consciousness and conceptualized the relationship between narrative and time within a three stage temporal sequence of mimesis whereby humans represent and understand their world (Ricoeur, 1988). Bruner (1987, 1991) proposed two ways of knowing (narrative and paradigmatic-positivistic) and developed a theoretical framework of narrative detailing its associated features. In his seminal book, Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences, Polkinghorne (1988) supported the thesis that narrative is a way through which "human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11), by means of an historical account of the role of narrative across the fields of history, literary theory and criticism, psychology, and philosophy.

Drawing on empirical research, several influential texts have been produced supporting the importance of narrative inquiry and its development as a methodology within health-related fields of practice and research. In this context, narratives have become increasingly perceived as vehicles through which illness experiences (Frank, 1995; Kleinman, 1988) and critical turning points in life (McAdams, 2001) could be understood. In medical anthropology, Kleinman (1988) expanded on the meaning of illness using patient narratives. These and other works led to the understanding that narratives are important tools that humans use to make sense of biographical disruptions related to illness and other challenging life circumstances (Bury, 2001; Riessman, 2008).

Since the 1990s, increased attention in the literature has been placed on the methodological and pedagogic aspects of narrative inquiry. Mishler (1995) developed a framework through which the burgeoning body of narrative studies could be compared in terms of their aims and analytical approaches. Within the field of education, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) coined the term "narrative inquiry" (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007) to refer to their conceptualization of a methodological framework for guiding the process of inquiry into the narrative phenomenon. Riessman (2008) provided a typology of analytical approaches (thematic, structural, dialogic, visual, and performative) that could be used in isolation or in combination to study narratives.

Methodological Purpose of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

One way in which qualitative methodologies are differentiated is by their intended purposes. Grounded theory is commonly recognized as a methodology that helps researchers understand psychological and social processes. Theorists who have advanced

grounded theory, arising in part from their research, offer systematic guidelines for the development of concepts and theories to understand human action and interaction (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These guidelines are differentiated by practices that range from more interpretive, within social constructivism (Charmaz, 2002), to those that align more closely with a realist perspective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is most often employed for the purpose of understanding human experience(s). The stories that people tell are the vehicles through which experiences are studied. This form of inquiry is based largely on the assumption that stories are a form of social action and the telling of stories is one way that humans experience life (Bruner, 1991; Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 2008). Within narrative inquiry, the purpose is further delineated to focusing on how the narrative is presented rather than what the narrative content conveys (Smith & Sparkes, 2006).

Although it is commonly assumed that grounded theory is the best methodological choice for developing theories about psychological and social processes, narrative inquiry has also been used to theorize psychosocial processes. Frank's (1995) narrative typology of illness, articulated in *The Wounded Storyteller*, is one such illustration. Frank, who described his resulting work as "theory" (p. xiii), developed the concept of illness narrative into three types: restitution, chaos, and quest, to illustrate the psychosocial processes through which people tell stories about their illness and identify what effects these ways of telling stories have on their overall experience of illness.

Theoretical Perspectives Influencing the Development and Application of Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

The theoretical roots of grounded theory and narrative inquiry can both be traced to American pragmatism. The perspectives of American pragmatists such as George Herbert Mead and John Dewey have been critical to the development of symbolic interactionism, which is the theoretical approach more commonly associated with grounded theory in the literature. The perspectives of American pragmatists shaped the development of three major premises of symbolic interactionism that were articulated by Blumer (1969): the meaning that individuals hold for objects (physical, social, and abstract) determines their actions toward these objects; individuals generate meaning for objects during their interaction with others; individuals continuously interpret their situations and these interpretations influence action. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes a naturalistic approach that engages directly with the empirical world and focuses on understanding human interaction and behavior through meaning. One can note the influence of American pragmatism and symbolic interactionism in Glaser and Strauss' (1965) original work that was situated in micro-level contexts (e.g., long-term care environments) and which emphasized a close iterative relationship between researchers and the data collected from the empirical world.

Similarly, American pragmatists also had a profound influence on the development of narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) drew from the Deweyan theory of experience (Dewey, 1938) when they proposed a three dimensional framework for narrative inquiry that is bounded by "temporality, sociality, and place" (p. 479). Dewey's (1938) theory of experience highlighted two features: interaction and continuity. Dewey postulated that the interactions that individuals have with their social

context influence their experience and that past experiences affect future experiences. Blumer (1969) also acknowledged Dewey's perspective on the role of interaction and temporality on experience as a key component on which he developed the theoretical perspective and methodological approach of symbolic interactionism.

In addition to the Deweyan theory of experience, the development and application of narrative inquiry has also been influenced by narrative theory. In particular, the narrative theory of Bruner (1987; 1991) has strongly influenced the development of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006). Bruner (1987) classified human thinking (ways of knowing) in two main ways, through the narrative mode and the paradigmatic-positivistic mode. The narrative mode perceives and constructs reality through stories, whereas the paradigmatic mode relies on logical and inductive reasoning. The narrative mode of thinking and the narrative use of language are inextricably linked (Bruner, 1987). There are several features of narrative that are utilized by humans to construct social reality including narrative organization of events, the storied nature of reality, and the storied form of experience (Bruner, 1991).

Bruner's narrative theory helps to explain why and in what ways narrative inquirers approach a subject of interest differently than grounded theorists, even those operating within constructivist paradigms. Narrative inquirers believe that humans communicate their experiences using co-constructed narratives that offer an epistemological portal through which experiences can be viewed and interpreted and then re-presented using storied forms. This approach is underpinned by the ontological assumption that humans organize their experiences, memories, life situations, and events in narrative form and as such the nature of reality is at least in part storied. This ontological stance extends the conventional understanding of narrative from being a representation of experience (or some aspect of it) to narrative being a form of experience (Bruner, 1987, 1991). Grounded theorists have historically been more concerned with substantive cross-case theory development than the phenomenological, macro-contextual, performative, and structural understanding of singular narratives.

At the same time, narrative theory can also be conceived of providing a conceptual bridge that strengthens links between narrative inquiry and constructivist applications of grounded theory. Although narrative theory has not been commonly associated with grounded theory, the emphasis in narrative theory on the meaning of symbolic systems that humans use to construct reality, such as language (Bruner, 1987, 1991, 2004) does suggest theoretical commensurability between grounded theory (via symbolic interactionism) and narrative inquiry. Language is the most common form of data collected and analyzed in both narrative inquiry and grounded theory approaches, although it is more common to restrict the focus in grounded theory studies to what is being said as opposed to how it is said and what influences how it is said.

Paradigmatic Considerations

Different versions of grounded theory and narrative inquiry have been developed. The variety of approaches existing within the narrative inquiry tradition can be partly explained by the range of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., humanities-literature studies, psychology, anthropology, and sociology) that have contributed to its development; differences in approaches across grounded theory and narrative inquiry can also be

explained by how researchers position themselves paradigmatically. Sparkes and Smith (2008) observed that narrative researchers hold different ontological positions regarding narrative, which range from neo-realist to relativist. They divided the work of narrative inquirers into two camps, constructivist and constructionist. Constructivist approaches to narrative inquiry are focused on understanding inter-subjective, micro-psychosocial processes through the inner world of the participant. For example, Hall's (2011) study on the process through which women survive childhood maltreatment was situated within a constructivist paradigm. In this regard, narratives and the findings therein were perceived to be co-constructed and were thus examined with a focus on understanding the various social elements in the micro-context influencing the co-construction (e.g., the teller, the listener, the intended or implied audience, the research team). In contrast, constructionist approaches emphasize narrative as a form of social action and consider the influence of socio-cultural factors, language, and societal discourse on human behavior. A constructionist approach is reflected in Hole's (2007) narrative research, which asked how deaf women perceive that their identity is shaped by hearing loss and how prevailing discourses of normalcy and deaf culture influence identity formation. Another example of constructionist research can be found in Thille and Russell's (2010) study in which they examined the types of discourses physicians draw from when speaking about chronic illness management care. Although distinctions between constructivist and constructionist definitions are useful heuristically and have some currency, there remains a lack of agreement about their distinctive parameters. For example, Smith and Sparkes (2006) explored the paradigmatic slippage that researchers might experience when they adhere to realist ontology but incorporate constructivist epistemology.

The differences in existing versions of grounded theory are also partly explained by paradigmatic variations. The contrasting epistemological backgrounds of Glaser and Strauss (1967) resulted in a "shaky" post-positivist foundation that was vulnerable to paradigm shifts in the decades that followed the original conceptualization of their approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Kathy Charmaz (2006, 2009) dichotomized grounded theory by two contrasting paradigms: objectivist grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory. Using this framework, the works of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) were categorized in the objectivist camp. Charmaz (2006), along with other contemporaries such as Clarke (2003) and Bryant (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), situate themselves in the constructivist camp. Constructivist grounded theorists adhere to similar principles as many contemporary narrative inquirers such as Riessman (2008), and actively engage with these principles by using methods from narrative inquiry (see Charmaz, 1999, and Clarke, 2005). Constructivist grounded theory is informed by a relativist ontology and transactional epistemology. Proponents emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives of participants and the researcher; the influence of social structures and processes at micro and macro levels during analyses; and the reflexive role of the researcher throughout the research process. Constructivist grounded theorists adopt a subjective "inside" perspective to understanding social situations as opposed to observing neutrally from the outside (Charmaz, 2009, p. 142). They note that objectivist grounded theorists assume a separate, un-biased, unobtrusive, researcher role in collecting and analyzing data and focus on the content of expressed verbalizations and observable behaviors (Charmaz, 2006, 2009). However, it is important to note that within the empirical literature where authors invoke the use of constructivist

grounded theory, we have observed an inconsistent or cursory documentation of relational and reflexive processes.

Researcher-Phenomenon, Researcher-Process, and Researcher-Participant Relationships in Narrative Inquiry and Grounded Theory

Epistemologically, the relationships that the researcher has with the phenomenon of interest and the research process are treated differently in narrative inquiry when compared to grounded theory. In a narrative inquiry, these relationships are scrutinized as it is argued that to remain "silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self" is a type of self-deception (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 62). Thus, within the narrative inquiry literature, it is not uncommon for researchers to begin reporting on their studies with an exposition of their relationship with the researched phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Birmingham's (2010) article reporting on a study inquiring into the stories of mothers with children diagnosed with autism is exemplary of how, in a narrative inquiry, participants' and researchers' stories get told and re-told as part of the inquiry. Birmingham began the article by revealing her relationship with the phenomenon of interest (i.e., being a mother of a child with autism) and told the story of how her academic life and personal life intersected with the conceptualization of the study. The report included a reflexive examination of the inquiry process, casting light on the role of the researcher and her positioning within the study.

Researcher-participant relationships are a key focus of the narrative inquiry process and are thus dealt with differently in textbooks (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2008) when compared to grounded theory reference texts. In a narrative inquiry, relational issues are meant to be at the center of every phase of the process, for example, negotiating entry into participants' lives; discussing consent; relating with participants during data collection; and in relation to the representation of findings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This approach entails ongoing reflections by the researcher on the dialogical process of consent and the participant's perception of the researcher; in other words, who the researcher is to participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and why participants engage in the researcher's study. Frank (2005) illustrated the transformative impact of engaging in self-reflective conversations for both the participant and the researcher. Within the context of a larger narrative inquiry conducted with five Aboriginal women living with HIV/AIDS, Caine (2010) began the article with an intimate exploration of the geographical landscapes in which she grew up and then proceeded to illustrate how her experiences of body and place related to the stories and experiences of one of the study's participants and to the inquiry process. In Hole's (2007) constructionist research, she developed collaborative relationships that involved co-constructed interviews, sharing the data analysis with participants, and soliciting feedback on individual narratives. These strategies and Hole's use of reflexivity helped to address the inherent representational problem of a researcher able to hear interpreting the experiences of deaf women.

In contrast, grounded theorists center discussions on researcher-participant relationships in relation to the outcome of data collection. For example, the relational focus in Charmaz's (2006) work could be perceived as somewhat technical and instrumental in the sense that the relationship is mainly conceptualized as a means

through which rich data can be obtained. It is important to note, however, that a more constructivist stance that calls for explicit engagement with processes such as reflexivity and participant-researcher relationships has been advocated in the grounded theory literature (Hall & Callery, 2001; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). These processes call for researchers to "bring to the surface their own histories and thinking…to create a point of referral and interrogation for themselves, and subsequently the reader, in relation to their theoretical analysis. Such a strategy makes the researcher's impact on the reconstruction of meaning into theory clearer" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 11). Underwood, Satterthwait, and Bartlett (2010) used reflexivity to uncover the first author's assumptions regarding older individuals' lived experience of the body and to subsequently revise the interview questions and manner in which they were posed. The illumination of the impact that researcher-participant relationships has on data recently provided by Underwood et al. (2010) and also by Priya (2010) is uncommon. Thus, we concur with Hall and Callery (2001) that such reflexive processes within the grounded theory literature continue to be a relatively neglected area.

Sampling

A review of the narrative research literature reveals that a wide range of sample sizes are used, from two (Birmingham, 2010) to 14 (Smith & Sparkes, 2005) to 600 (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). The possibility of prescribing sample size for the research design of a narrative inquiry is complicated by the fact that sample size is predicated on decisions, including: the type of data to be collected; number of participants; duration of researcher-participant relationships; number of contacts with participants; and size of data to be sampled for the analysis. Moreover, the actual number of participants used in a study does not necessarily translate to quality of findings.

In grounded theory, a key type of sampling that is prescribed is theoretical sampling, a process that entails any of the following: recruiting new participants; returning to the existing sample; and finding new forms of data for the purpose of collecting further information on the categories of an emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this regard, data collection becomes progressively focused with the intention of delineating initial concepts, categories, and relationships (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Wuest and Hodkins (2011) used the first author's early research to illustrate how the process of theoretical sampling resulted in the identification of cultural differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal caregivers of children with otitis media, thus helping to refine the developing theory.

Our scan of the grounded theory empirical literature suggests that sample sizes in grounded theory studies typically range from 10-60, which is consistent with observations made by others (e.g., Starks & Trinidad, 2007). However, given the key process of theoretical sampling, it is difficult to prescribe or predict what sample size will be needed in a grounded theory study. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that data collection be guided by theoretical saturation, which in part depends on the *quality* of data obtained as opposed to the *quantity* of individuals recruited. Moreover, Charmaz (2006) suggested assessing multiple viewpoints and details about participants, their

actions, and the settings in which their actions take place to determine if there is need for further data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis in Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

In both grounded theory and narrative inquiry, researchers have acknowledged the potential of several data collection methods as sources of evidence (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Riessman, 2008). However, in practice, it seems that interviewing, participant observation, and field notes are commonly utilized methods in grounded theory studies (Backman, Del Fabro Smith, Smith, Montie, & Suto, 2007; Griffith, Caron, Desrosiers, & Thibeault, 2007; Leipert & Reutter, 2005). In contrast, narrative inquiry studies tend to draw from a broader range of data collection methods, including but not exclusive to: elicited written texts from participants (e.g., journals), photography, and other types of artifacts. Keats' (2009) narrative study of vicarious responses to trauma exemplified a broad use of textual representations that are presented to participants as a way of eliciting real time reactions. This variety of data collection methods enabled participants to create their narratives in multiple or preferred forms (e.g., through visual imagery). Moreover, in terms of interviews, narrative inquirers have described the use of the narrative interviewing technique wherein the focus is not only to actively listen for the stories in participants' accounts, but also to actively engage participants in the telling of stories (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

The differences in the analytic process involved in grounded theory and narrative inquiry can be explained by what Riessman (2009) refers to as the "category centered" and "case centered" (p. 391) nature of both approaches, respectively. In grounded theory, the focus of analytical procedures is to locate relationships between concepts and themes across interviews through a process of constant comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Situated within a post-positivist perspective, and following an initial open coding process, Backman et al. (2007) reduced the data from larger clusters to increasingly refined themes and continued to assess the veracity of these themes against earlier categories and preliminary analyses. The final themes were presented as an explanatory framework and illustrated a social process of participation in mothering activities within a particular context that included life stages and daily routines.

In a narrative inquiry, the researcher strives to locate theory within a participant's narrative and keep participant stories intact. A story is considered to be a unit of analysis whereas in the grounded theory approach, a story is coded and then fragmented based on one or several categories of emerging interest. A narrative analysis might also consist of coding procedures; however in this case, the researcher codes data by looking for narrative features such as plotlines, details of the setting, characters, and actions within a participant's account (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Hence, narrative inquiry differs analytically from grounded theory particularly in attending to more than just the content of a story. Both constructivist and constructionist approaches consider how events are storied and why events are storied in the way they are. This entails examining various features of communication and social action, including language and style. For example, after Hole (2007) transcribed American Sign Language (ASL) interviews to English she returned to the videotaped, signed interviews and analyzed them as "textual performance"(p. 703), using the written transcript as an anchor. This analytic choice

captured the expressive features and other nuances of ASL that could have been lost through reliance on written transcripts alone. Thus, even the taken for granted process of transcription is considered to be an interpretive process that raises questions about analysis. Only at the final stages of an interpretive process do narrative inquirers embark on a comparative investigation across cases to elucidate further differences in experience while considering temporality and context (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2008).

The analytic procedures that grounded theorists use in their studies appear to be more easily identified in published reports and reference texts, whereas the analytical processes of narrative inquirers such as Frank (1995) are less easily discerned (Atkinson, 1997). Glaser and Strauss (1967) produced a book to describe the methodological procedures that helped to produce their substantive theory on the awareness of dying (Glaser & Strauss, 1965); similarly, in her methodological text, Charmaz (2006) detailed the analytical process of her research on suffering in chronic illness. More recently, Reid-Searl, Moxham, Walker and Happell (2010) documented a detailed description of their data analysis, which makes transparent the commonly accepted procedures developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). The guidelines and procedures of grounded theory are often captured within a single reference text (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), translate easily to research reports, and are an attractive feature when arguing for credibility. The explicit systematic and rigorous procedures developed and documented in grounded theory serve to legitimize its use as a research approach (Thomas & James, 2006). The need for further explication of analytic processes, such as the synthesis offered by Riessman (2008), is particularly important for the narrative inquiry tradition given the range of distinct approaches to analysis developed therein.

Criteria for Quality Appraisal in Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

There are similarities and differences in the way in which criteria for quality appraisal are conceptualized in grounded theory and narrative inquiry. Credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness are all criteria of quality that have been invoked by grounded theorists and narrative inquirers working from post-positivist, constructivist, and constructionist assumptions. Pundits of both methodologies have suggested that the quality of a study can be conveyed through the transparency of the research process (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Riessman, 2008). However, transparency is inconsistently evident in the research reports of narrative inquiries.

In some cases (e.g., Frank, 1995), narrative inquirers have not discussed the processes of data collection, analysis, and limitations of their work when compared to grounded theory research reports. This lack of transparency can make it a challenge for the reader to appraise the trustworthiness of a narrative inquiry study. In part, this omission might be because of the fact that narrative inquirers also ascribe to quality appraisal concepts that diverge from those conventionally used in the grounded theory literature. For example, narrative inquirers have proposed that the quality of a study be appraised by its aesthetic features and capacity to evoke emotion in the reader/audience (Riessman, 2008). Moreover, they emphasize that the meanings participants associate with events are of more importance than the historical accuracy of the events. These experienced meanings are filtered through language, how people want to present

themselves to the listener, interaction between the listener and storyteller, and the limitations of reflective processes. The presence of such filters reinforces the importance of informing the audience what steps were taken to try to reduce the gap between participants' experienced meanings and the findings presented (Polkinghorne, 2007).

Representation of Findings in Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

Grounded theory studies are commonly published using the conventional formats and linear style of reporting that is typically required of health sciences journals (see Backman et al., 2007 and Reid-Searl et al., 2010). By stark contrast, the forms of representation that narrative inquirers utilize to communicate their findings are much more diverse. Narrative inquirers draw from a variety of disciplines to represent their findings, including but not exclusive to the literary, visual, and performative arts. Although artistic modalities can be effective in promoting audience engagement with research findings, the use of such approaches may also make it difficult for audiences to determine boundaries between researchers and their data and the process of research with the outcomes of research. Upon receiving research findings delivered through performative texts, visual arts, and written stories, one can be left "stranded" with questions about researchers' assumptions, intentions, data sources, and analytical processes. However, in the context of a conventional research report it is typical to receive answers to these types of questions at least in part, if not to the full satisfaction of the reader. The former situation raises ethical concerns regarding the researchers' responsibilities to the audience in relation to providing basic information about the research process prior to engaging the audience in a performative/artistic representation of the research findings (e.g., through theatre, dance, or visual or literary arts). Similarly, Atkinson (1997) identified the need to "engage systematically" (p. 338) with narrative inquiries and the challenge for readers to do so when little information is presented on primary data or the analytic process.

Critiques Associated with Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry

The critiques associated with the narrative inquiry approach are in many respects opposite to those associated with grounded theory methodology. The emphasis on coding procedures in grounded theory and consequent fragmentation of data is associated with the concern of "stripping away" individuals and their experiences in the interest of finding patterns across cases. Bailey and Jackson (2003) raised this issue of diluting the impact of unique stories in their experience of using grounded theory, writing that "we noticed certain stories leapt off the page — they wanted to be told" (p. 62). In many respects, the results of a focus on coding procedures in grounded theory could be considered antithetical to the purposes of qualitative research which include remaining close to individual perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Grounded theory methodology has also been critiqued for a tendency to produce simplified representations of complex phenomena as well as to constrain the interpretive aspects of qualitative analysis (Thomas & James, 2006).

In contrast, narrative inquiry approaches have been challenged on the valorization of the personal narrative as a "hyperauthentic version" (Atkinson, 1997, p. 343) of

participant experiences and identities. Instead, Atkinson highlights the importance of considering narratives as "modes of performance, of ordering, of remembering, of interaction" (p. 343), which need to be subjected to systematic analysis as one would do with other forms of data. Moreover, narrative inquiries can be perceived as "overly personal and interpersonal" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 181), whereas grounded theory approaches have been perceived as dissecting and diluting participant experiences and contexts (e.g., Bailey & Jackson, 2003; Cohn et al., 2009).

Grounded theory and narrative inquiry also share similar critiques. Atkinson (1997) observed that at times narrative inquirers overlook contextual aspects of personal narratives and how they are constructed and cited Frank's (1995) work as an example to support this assertion. The reporting style of grounded theory studies has also been critiqued for de-contextualizing how data are constructed even in constructivist versions (Riessman, 2009).

Grounded Theory and Narrative Inquiry: Theoretically Commensurable, Methodologically Complementary

This comparative analysis suggests that grounded theory and narrative inquiry can be potential allies in a qualitative study given that they are theoretically commensurable and methodologically complementary. From a theoretical perspective, grounded theory and narrative inquiry are commensurable because both have been influenced by the work of American pragmatists. Moreover, narrative theory can constitute a bridge between narrative inquiry and the symbolic interaction roots of grounded theory. From a methodological perspective, the comparative analysis of grounded theory and narrative inquiry reveals that the strengths of one approach can offset the limitations associated with the other. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that leveraging the strengths of narrative inquiry to offset the critiques associated with grounded theory is a key reason why researchers have chosen to draw from both methodologies in the context of one study.

In particular, researchers have invoked the rationale of using narrative inquiry to compensate for concerns regarding the fragmentation of text in grounded theory and consequent loss of participant stories (e.g., Cohn et al., 2009; Drew, 2005, 2007; Herrera, Dahlblom, Dahlgren, & Kullgren, 2006; Schow, 2006). For example, Drew (2005, 2007) combined the analytical procedures of grounded theory with narrative analysis to explore how having a history of childhood cancer influences social and personal wellbeing in young adulthood. Although not explicitly stated, the paradigmatic perspective that seems to have influenced this study is post-positivist in the application of grounded theory methods and constructivist-constructionist in the application of narrative analysis. Data collection involved semi-structured written questionnaires and was followed by in-depth interviews. Data analysis involved open coding, axial coding, and then narrative analysis. The combined analytical approach was considered useful for revealing the complex relationship between cancer, identity development, and the ways in which participants story their experiences of surviving cancer.

Researchers have also combined the analytical methods of narrative inquiry and grounded theory to enrich the understanding of the dynamic nature of core categories that emerge in a grounded theory analysis (e.g., Bailey & Jackson, 2003, 2005; Drew, 2005,

2007; Floersch et al., 2010). It is not uncommon for qualitative health researchers to be interested in individual experiences and processes in relation to a particular phenomenon as well as experiences and processes that are common across a group of participants. This dual concern can be addressed by a combined methodological approach that harnesses the strengths of grounded theory and narrative inquiry.

We also observe that researchers increasingly combine grounded theory with the methods of narrative inquiry (e.g., Charmaz, 1999) and other approaches such as participatory research (Teram et al., 2005) to address issues associated with the representation of findings and knowledge translation. These concerns include how findings can be communicated in ways that are accessible to audiences beyond those who are situated in academia, and which do not "strip" away individual voice and experience. Narrative approaches, which might include a variety of mediums (e.g., visual, literary, performative), can potentially offer a vehicle through which theory can made accessible to a wider audience, including service providers, service recipients, and family caregivers.

Riessman (2009), who has written extensively on narrative inquiry, has proposed that unique contributions to knowledge can be provided by studies adopting both grounded theory and narrative inquiry. In her review of Charmaz's (2006) book, Riessman (2009) concluded by calling attention to the need for methodological examination of how the strengths of grounded theory and narrative inquiry might be maximized within a research design. As discussed earlier, the integration of these two methodologies has already been observed in the work of established grounded theorists. For example, Charmaz (1999) combined methods from both grounded theory and narrative inquiry to guide analysis and representation of findings in her study, thereby providing a profound understanding of suffering during chronic illness as a social process.

Combined Methodological Approaches: Cautionary Considerations

Despite the complementarities between grounded theory and narrative inquiry, there are several considerations to be made before combining these two approaches in a qualitative study. First, there is the issue of paradigmatic positioning. Guba and Lincoln (2005) contended that combining methods is acceptable, particularly in cases where methods are derived from methodologies situated within the same or commensurable paradigms. Moreover, Carter and Little (2007) asserted the importance of maintaining a "coherent epistemological position" (p. 1326) in studies that combine methods. These assertions suggest the necessity of paradigmatic compatibility when combining the methods of grounded theory and narrative inquiry. For example, applying an "objectivist" version of grounded theory in combination with the principles and processes of a constructionist approach to narrative inquiry might raise concerns regarding coherence within the study's ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological assumptions.

Second, to our knowledge, no systematic investigation of studies that combine these two approaches (let alone others) has been made; whereas these philosophical, methodological, and pragmatic issues have been systematically examined where quantitative-qualitative mixed methods research is concerned (e.g., Bryman, 2006). Our

efforts in this article are in some small measure an effort to address this gap. Still, several questions regarding studies that combine the methods, principles, and processes of grounded theory with narrative inquiry remain unexamined, including: philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of such studies; purposes and rationales that researchers have for drawing from these two methodologies; how integration of methods, processes, and principles from these two methodologies occurs during the data collection, analysis, and representation stages of the research; the limitations and challenges presented to researchers in these integrated methodological contexts; and the kinds of outcomes gained by combined methodological approaches.

Third, there are practical considerations to combining methodologies that also need to be considered, such as the skill level or expertise of the researcher across methodologies (Morse & Chung, 2003; Seaton, 2005). It is important for researchers to be well-versed in both approaches, including their potential strengths and limitations to avoid pitfalls in research design and application. Moreover, it might be beneficial for the field if researchers adopting a combined approach would more consistently explore and document their paradigmatic stance as there is a tendency to gloss over this feature of the research design in research reports. Additionally, Baker, Wuest, and Stern (1992) suggested that researchers explain how methodological approaches were combined in studies, provide insight into their decision making processes of choosing a combined approach, and discuss how they deviated from conventional versions of the methodologies in question. This transparency is especially important given that there already exists a tendency for researchers to "blur distinctions" between qualitative traditions and/or combine methods from different methodologies but report the process as if only one methodology was used (Baker et al., 1992, p. 1355; Morse, 1989).

Finally, it should not be "naïvely presumed" (Denzin, 2010, p. 422) that combining methods from different methodologies will automatically produce a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study. It might be that a combined approach reveals divergent findings instead (Silverman, 2005).

Summary and Conclusion

This article addresses a gap in the literature related to combining methodological approaches in qualitative research, particularly where grounded theory and narrative inquiry are concerned. Limited knowledge regarding the historical, philosophical, and theoretical background of methodologies from which methods are drawn can lead to misrepresentation and misappropriation of methodologies (and their respective methods) and, consequently, call into question the credibility of combined qualitative methodology research in general. In the case of integrating the methods, principles and processes of grounded theory with narrative inquiry, our analysis shows that these two approaches are theoretically commensurable; they can be natural allies within a qualitative study. Moreover, these two approaches can be considered as methodologically complementary in that the concerns of fragmentation and de-contextualization in grounded theory can be offset by the "situated and particular" focus associated with narrative inquiry. Combining the two approaches creates possibilities for developing a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study and making findings accessible to a wider range of audience. Future work, however, is needed to examine what ways these two approaches can

complement each other, through what kinds of research designs, and with what kinds of effects.

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