



# *Qualitative Sociology Review – Book Reviews*

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Book Review: Multiple Case Narrative. A Qualitative Approach to  
studying multiple populations  
by Asher Shkedi. Studies in Narrative 7. John Benjamins Publishing  
Co., 2005, 210 pp.

In the last decades, narrative inquiry has been systematically developed as an independent and promising branch of qualitative research, useful for wide range of researchers including those practicing sociology, social anthropology, linguistics, education, psychology and related disciplines. The consequences of such popularization are twofold. On the one hand, researchers interested in narrative studies try to construct substantial basis for the approach, distinguishing many orientations towards narrative connected with a variety of schools of social thought and specifying common paradigmatic roots which are responsible for the existence of so called narrative tradition and its history among other research methods. On the other hand researchers, especially those focused on practical aspects of the approach, pay much attention to application of multiple techniques of data gathering and analyzing as well as their possible combinations in order to create more useful, multi-purpose or problem-oriented research method. The book written by Asher Shkedi seems to accomplish these goals and move beyond with a proposal of new research strategy based on the author's experience in the field of narrative research.

The structure of the book renders these purposes. First three chapters deal with theoretical foundations of qualitative research in general, ontological, epistemological, methodological and cognitive issues common for all research approaches and basic also for narrative inquiry and a research strategy proposed by Shkedi, called Multiple Case Narrative. The author introduces assumptions of the approach with respect to other existing methods and general social research methodology, shaping uniqueness of multiple case narrative mostly through comparison with methods for studying multiple populations like collective case study, case survey or meta-ethnography. These theoretical considerations make ground for step-by-step guide to applying presented strategy. Next nine chapters are devoted to the principles, types, combinations and innovations of data collection, analysis and integration into a research report. Almost all aspects of qualitative research practice are discussed, including a role of a researcher and his/her relationship with those under study, characteristics of observation and interview techniques, types and stages of analysis, connection between empirical findings and theories and finally suggestions for writing research reports. In the last chapter, author raises other well-known questions for qualitative researchers, questions concerning validity, reliability

and possibility of generalization, aiming to formulate standards of trustworthiness in accordance to the constructivist approach and multiple case narrative.

The whole book and all separate chapters aim to emphasize uniqueness of introduced strategy; offering new principles of doing narrative research but more often proposing new understanding of already established and developed prescriptions for qualitative research. Among many visible references to other methods, one inspiration seems to be most influential, shaping the process of data analysis and the whole research logic of the multiple case narrative, that is grounded theory methodology. Reading about a categorization as a way of analysis, about naming in the initial stages, mapping categories and properties, generating the core category and its sub-categories or constructing theoretical categories, it is easy to identify linkage with both classic and constructivist grounded theory procedures. Such reference gives a strong methodological basis but at the same time raises a question about real uniqueness of the strategy introduced in the book. What is new then? Shkedi aims to create a method which combines strengths of qualitative and quantitative research strategies. The method with constructivist background and positivistic accuracy, which provides in-depth analysis and deals with large samples at the same time. For some readers, such method might be something they look forward, a smart mixture of quality and quantity in social research. For others, the method which is simultaneously wide and in-depth will be doubtful. It is not clear enough why multiple cases are better than single and it might be surprising to read about “correlations between categories” especially for an interpretive social researcher skilled in conceptualization.

Nevertheless, the book is a good overview of contemporary qualitative research strategies, methodological problems and procedural solutions. It will be useful for beginners and experienced researchers, as a source of guidelines, examples and inspirations for conducting case studies and narrative research in all fields and within multiple specializations.

## **Citation**

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