

_____ (the site). At this stage in the research, the _____ (central phenomenon) will be generally defined as _____ (a general definition of the central concept).

As I show in the script, several terms can be used to encode a passage for a specific approach to qualitative research. In the purpose statement,

- The writer identifies the specific qualitative approach used in the study by mentioning the type. The name of the approach comes first in the passage, thus foreshadowing the inquiry approach for data collection, analysis, and report writing.
- The writer encodes the passage with words that indicate the action of the researcher and the focus of the approach to research. For example, I associate certain words with qualitative research, such as “understand experiences” (useful in narrative studies), “describe” (useful in case studies, ethnographies, and phenomenologies), “meaning ascribed” (associated with phenomenologies), “develop or generate” (useful in grounded theory), and “discover” (useful in all approaches).
- I identify several words that a researcher would include in a purpose statement to encode the purpose statement for the approach chosen (see Table 6.1). These words indicate not only researchers’ actions but also the foci and outcomes of the studies.
- The writer identifies the central phenomenon. The central phenomenon is the one, central concept being explored or examined in the research study. I generally recommend that qualitative researchers focus on only one concept (e.g., the campus reaction to the gunman, or the values of the sXers) at the beginning of a study. Comparing groups or looking for linkages can be included in the study as one gains experiences in the field and engages in initial exploration of the central phenomenon.
- The writer foreshadows the participants and the site for the study, whether the participants are one individual (i.e., narrative or case study), several individuals (i.e., grounded theory or phenomenology), a group (i.e., ethnography), or a site (i.e., program, event, activity, or place in a case study).
- I include a general definition for the central phenomenon. This definition may be difficult to determine with any specificity in advance. But, for example, in a narrative study, a writer might define the types of stories to be collected (e.g., life stages, childhood memories, the transition from adolescence to adulthood, attendance at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting). In a phenomenology, the central phenomenon to be explored might be specified such as the meaning of grief, anger, or even chess playing (Aanstoos, 1985). In grounded theory, the central phenomenon might be identified as a concept central to the process being examined. In an ethnography, the writer might identify the key cultural concepts being examined such as roles, behaviors, acculturation, communication, myths, stories, or other concepts that the researcher plans to take into the