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QUALITATIVE METHODS IN BUSINESS STUDIES

Torben Damgaard, Per V. Freytag, and
Per Darmer

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the use of qualitative studies in business to business research.
It highlights some of the differences and similarities between qualitative methods to
illustrate the methodological consequences of choosing one method in preference to
another. Three methods are presented: The Case Study Method, Grounded Theory,
and the Humanistic Inquiry. A general presentation of each of the methods is fol-
lowed by a description of their use in practice—how is research planned and per-
formed according to each method? Finally, a critical review of the three methods is
made. it is emphasized that choice and use of qualitative method must be consistent
with the problem, the type of explanation to be used, and the theory in use. Further,
it is demonstrated how the choice of method will have crucial consequences for the
direction and conclusion of a study. To use qualitative methods in business to busi-
ness studies the researcher must meet critical methodological demands; why a
method is chosen, how it can be used, and in which way it is possible to triangulate
with other methods.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years a growth in the use of qualitative methods in business to business research has been observed. When doing qualitatively oriented research it is important to be consistent in choosing procedures and criteria for collecting, coding, and analyzing data and using existing theories—as important as if you do quantitatively oriented research.

However, articles concerning qualitative methods in business studies are far apart. In the literature on business research only a few articles focus on the heterogeneity in different qualitative approaches and on the different demands and possible applications of these approaches. One example is Wilson's article (1987). He tries to find an adequate method when developing theory on a specific research problem—organizational buying behavior. Wilson "suggests an approach to theory development that uses small sample studies to generate propositions for testing in large sample studies," whereas we want to discuss how the properties of different methods are closely related to the possible use of these methods.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight differences within qualitative methods at an ontological, epistemological, and methodological level. To give this insight we have chosen three examples of qualitative methods used in business studies. The primary aim is to illustrate the methodological consequences of choosing one qualitative method in preference to another. How can we use existing theories? What questions do we ask? How do we collect and code data? And so on. Different methods give different answers to these questions. Therefore, it is very important to evaluate which overall method to apply to a given problem situation. The method the researcher chooses is definitely a determining factor as to what the research will lead to.

The primary aim—to illustrate the consequences of the choice of a certain qualitative method—is the primary criterion behind the selection of the methods we present in this article: The Case Study Method (e.g., Yin, 1989), Grounded Theory (e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and The Humanistic Inquiry (e.g., Hirschman, 1986). We have chosen these because they are different at the ontological, epistemological, but first and foremost the methodological level (See Table 1). They are well-known and developed although to different degrees. They represent a positivistic and neo-positivistic approach—the prevailing method in business research—as well as a more interpretative approach based on a constructivist paradigm (e.g., Guba 1990). Further, the three chosen methods elucidate the diversity which may be observed in the various contributions' perception of the role of the researcher and the nature of the theory that he may produce. That is, they are different at the epistemological level. Qualitative studies cannot be representative as quantitative studies, but we include methods which seek explanations similar to the quantitative as well as studies with a focus on relativistic understanding. At the methodological level the diversity is represented through a wide range of qualitative data collecting techniques, for example, observations, in-depth interviews, and group interviews.

The Case Study Method is a qualitative approach dealing with qualitative data which are similar to the quantitative survey studies that are so predominant within business research. Grounded Theory is a qualitative method which on one hand is based on a positivistic paradigm, but on the other hand establishes procedures for qualitative data collection when examining intangible phenomena and relations. Finally, the Humanistic Inquiry is a qualitative method which due to its interpretative approach deviates considerably from the positivistic research that has been predominant within business studies. This interpretative method is used to develop an understanding of phenomena and relations.

The three methods differ on many points. We discuss how this affects their use. An appropriate method must be chosen depending on the situation in which the subject matter appears. Further, the appropriateness of the method depends on the purpose of the study. Then, the formulation of the problem is crucial for the choice of method.

As appears we argue for the possibility of choosing "a best method." This perspective on the discussion of choice of method places the authors in a specific paradigm—a neo-positivistic one. If the paradigm behind this paper had been positivistic or hermeneutic the discussion of which method to choose would have been very different. In a positivistic paradigm the methods have to be positivistic and similarly from a hermeneutic viewpoint the choice of methods has to be between hermeneutic methods. Only neo-positivistic approaches accept a choice of methods across different paradigms.

The paper's introductory section is followed by a general presentation of the three individual methods on their own premises. The three methods are presented in accordance with one central source chosen to represent each method. The reason for choosing one source to represent each of the three methods is that it makes it possible to present each method consistently. The methods differ more or less when used by researchers. A presentation of the methods considering this diversity would make it difficult to present the methods in a consistent and unambiguous way.

The general presentation of the three methods places them in a scientific context and is concluded by a figure which emphasizes differences and similarities on selected dimensions. The authors view the selected dimensions as central both with regard to comparing the three methods but also in relation to the content of the paper in general and the presentation of the methods in particular.

The presentation of the methods in general is followed by an illustration of how the three methods are used in practice, that is, how research is planned and performed according to the guidelines of the methods in question. The presentation in this paragraph is also in accordance with the sources used. The presentation is, however, not purely theoretical but based on empirical data, as an interview with an architect concerning architects' view on the use of marketing is used as a joint case for the three methods. The authors have interviewed the architect for this paper especially in order to compare the three methods empirically.

The three methods have now been presented. In section 4 is a critical review of the three methods. The criticism is stated in such a way that it is comparable and opens a discussion as to which of the three methods is to be used and when. In the conclusion (section 5) the paper's purpose and paradigm are discussed and the most essential conclusions are summarized.

THE SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES

The Case Study Method

The Case Study Method is not a homogeneous approach. Under the heading, the Case Study Method, there are different method versions (e.g., Bonoma, 1985; Silverman, 1989; Alpert, 1989). These are, however, not treated more thoroughly in this article, as they only offer selective method presentations. Still, it is relevant to mention these contributions, as they illustrate that the literature on qualitative method is heterogeneous, and a presentation is not necessarily leading to such a relatively homogeneous approach as presented here. The version of the Case Study Method, that we choose to present, is first of all inspired by Yin's book, *Case Study Research* (1989). This presentation attempts to describe the methodological approach both at a specific level, but also at a more scientific level. In this sense the contribution suits the purpose of the paper very well. For the same reason it differs from a great part of the literature on case analyses which are often used in marketing. These are often technically oriented and deal with data collecting techniques.

Yin emphasizes that qualitative methods are suitable for treating *how* and *why* problems.

"How" or "Why" Questions

Case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon in some real-life context (Yin, 1989, p. 13).

The Case Study Method is often used as the explorative part of a quantitative survey. If this was the only function of the method the discussion would not be very interesting. In this case the positivistic evaluation criteria would be ensured via a survey. But the Case Study Method can have other and more far-reaching objectives than just being. The above quotation shows that the purpose can exactly be to answer questions of how and when. Furthermore, the purpose of a case study may also be descriptive and explanatory. The Case Study Method can be used for studies in a real-life context and thus differs from the experiments which are artificial situations the researcher may design in order to control events.
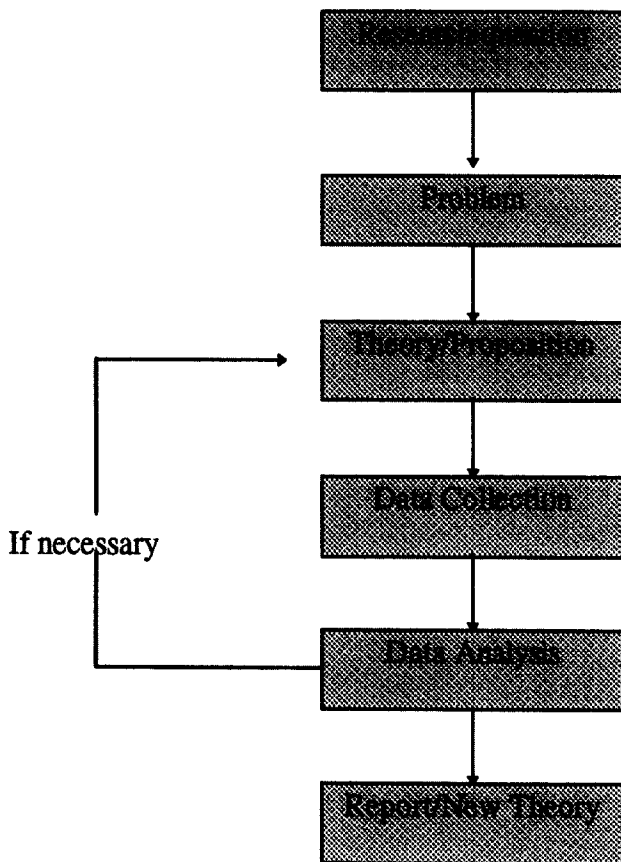
Figure 1. The Design of the Case Study Method

The fact that experiments cannot be carried out in a traditional positivistic sense argues for choosing the Case Study Method in many studies in business research. The problems are perceived as too complex for real experimental tests. In business studies the subject matter is often the whole organization or even many organizations. Analyzing everyday activities is crucial to understand the complex subject matters of organizations. But, everyday activities cannot be quantified as in surveys or controlled as in experiments. This fact disqualifies in advance the experimental design. An experimental design is often preferred in business studies because it satisfies the positivistic evaluation criteria. Although the subject matter in case studies hinders the experimental design and a statistical approach, Yin argues for maintaining the positivistic evaluation criteria. For him, the role of the researcher still is to perceive and deduce his way to durable theories.

The researcher has to use interviews or other qualitative data collecting techniques, and afterwards he possesses a great number of heterogeneous data which cannot be compared immediately from one interview to the next. Yet Yin (1989, p. 38) argues that the Case Study Method may lead to objective generalizations and the positivistic evaluation criteria must still be followed by using a method close to the hypothetical-deductive method.

Case Study Method as a Hypothetical-Deductive Method

The Case Study Method emphasizes the necessity of defining the relevant theory or theories which may be advanced regarding the researched problem area before the collection of data begins. Such a definition is necessary because the theories must be framed as propositions that are to be tested with data. The propositions must be advanced in order for the researcher to control the research process. The Case Study Method thus advances a methodology which follows the hypothetical-deductive method very closely (1989, p. 57).

Before collecting data the researcher has to elaborate theoretical models as a basis for defining propositions which have to be tested afterwards. Testing the propositions can take place if there is in advance consensus about: what is the problem, what theories are interesting in this situation, what solutions are there to the problem, and so forth.

The purpose is to formulate theories that can describe, explore or explain behavior, situations, and decisions. Explanation-building is a dominant mode of analysis. "To 'explain' a 'phenomenon' is to stipulate a set of causal links about it" (Yin, 1989, p. 113)—to identify the independent variables which lead to a certain outcome.

Using the Case Study Method it is necessary that the various phases of a research are separated and succeed each other. The argument for this is that Yin seeks to meet the positivistic ideals on validity and reliability. During the phase, which is called definition of theories, the following demands must be met (Yin, 1989, p. 40):

> *Construct validity*: The applied concepts must be operationalized properly.
> *Internal validity*: If the studies are explanatory or causal the causal relations must be established.
> *External validity*: The area to which the studies are to be generalized must be identified.

The collection of data must ensure:

> *Reliability*: That the case can be reproduced by using the same data collecting procedure.

According to Yin a reliable case study demands that the problem solving researcher keeps a case protocol (1989, chap. 3) and establishes a database (1989, chap. 4).

Yin focuses on the positivistic evaluation criteria, and as a positivist he perceives existing theories as provisional truths. The theories reflect "state of the art"—"what is known"—before the study is carried out. "Experienced investigators review previous research to develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic" (Yin, 1989, p. 18).

Grounded Theory

The aim of business studies is often normative. Different theories and models are used on companies, primarily in order to make these act according to the theories and the models, as this will make them act "rationally and efficiently." Applied methods in business studies reflect this (e.g., Robinson, Faris, & Wind, 1967; Webster & Wind, 1972; Porter, 1985; Choffrey & Lilien, 1980).

Grounded Theory (GT) is an exception to the rule on the normative aim of business studies. Strauss and Corbin (1990) establish a method which helps perform the difficult art of creating theory on the basis of empirical data. Thus, GT tries to use empirical data to elaborate theories about companies, their behavior, and so on in contrast to the normative approach in which theory sets the guidelines to which the company should adjust its behavior. In this paper Strauss and Corbin (1990) are used as the source for GT. We have done this in spite of and because of the fact that GT is presented in slightly different versions in the publications on GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and that Strauss and Corbin (1990) is the most detailed and concretized version published on GT.

The purpose of GT is to develop theory on a given phenomenon. The phenomenon may assume many different shapes. The following four examples illustrate the scope of phenomena a GT study may treat: Decision processes in a certain company, the Danes' attitude toward drunken driving, the employees' perception of a good leader, or architects' perception of marketing. The only obvious limitation is that the phenomenon must be studied qualitatively, as GT is a qualitative method.

The fact that GT is grounded means that it must be based on data. Theory must always be verified by data. This interaction between theory and empirical data, where the latter has to verify the former, is the reason why GT is also called "the constantly comparative method." GT develops theory on a given phenomenon. A condition of GT is that each study only treats one phenomenon. This is due to the fact that theory must be compared to and be supported by data, and that it requires the whole study being directed towards the phenomenon in question. This applies to both the data collection and the data analysis.

The GT study begins with a research question, and as in most other connections this research question controls the data collection, if you are to ground your theory in the collected data. GT is not especially strict in the data collecting phase. Broadly, you only have to follow the conditions of a qualitative method. The fact that GT is called a qualitative method must especially be related to the methodology which is the most prevailing within this method, that is, data collection by inter-

viewing key persons. These interviews provide the researcher with the empirical data for "grounding" the theory that the method develops in order to explain the studied phenomenon.

The data analysis in GT consists of a coding process to ensure that the theory is empirically grounded. Beside the indispensable coding process Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasize two conditions which are included in all GT studies: *creativity* and *theoretical sensitivity*. Simplified these two concepts mean: finding new aspects in existing data material as, for example, in developing existing or new theory. The two concepts emphasize exploring the data in order to find new meanings of these data. This is necessary because the method leads to new theory or develops existing theory.

The coding process creates a frame of reference for treating qualitative data. This is especially requested by persons who have not previously made qualitative studies. Thus, the above-mentioned creativity and theoretical sensitivity must take place within the method's frame of reference to ensure that the coding is carried out in a proper and empirically based way. The coding process deals with the way in which qualitative data can and must be categorized. Generally speaking categorization is an immanent part of all qualitative studies. GT provides the researcher with guidelines for doing this. The empirical data should be treated in a clear and progressive way in order to develop theories on the phenomenon.

The question whether the coding process has been completed in accordance with the guidelines of the frame of reference is estimated on the basis of the evaluation criteria which Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 252) advance for GT:

1. Validity, reliability and credibility.
2. Estimation of the process that generates, elaborates and tests theory.
3. Estimation of the empirical data of the result, that is, is the theory grounded?

The evaluation criteria are similar to the criteria which apply to positivism.

There are, however, certain modifications, as validity and reliability are supplemented with credibility which points out the problems of repeating qualitative studies with the same result. This is why qualitative studies must be estimated on their credibility. This modification, which is to a certain extent supplemented by point 2 and 3, shows that GT is based on a neo-positivistic approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990) do not explicitly mention their basis in the paradigm. This is probably due to the fact that they try to combine the qualitative data and their interpretation with strict guidelines. These must ensure the frames for an empirically based theory development—a theory development with a certain flexibility and creativity which does not get out of control, thus undermining the credibility of the study. As a supplement to the constantly comparative element GT often uses the researcher's interview copies and diaries to prove this credibility. The diaries contain the researcher's thoughts and considerations in connection with the study and the phenomenon. In GT studies these may often be diagrams or memos.

GT is a neo-positivistic approach which is underlined by the coding process. The purpose is to obtain knowledge from data about the phenomenon and its relations to other phenomena. This is to be reflected in the developed theory on the phenomenon in such a way that the phenomenon may be seen in its context both empirically and theoretically. The central part of a GT study is not only the phenomenon but also its relations and patterns. This is so, because the theory on the phenomenon could not be empirically grounded, if it did not involve the relations that the phenomenon influences and is influenced by.

The evaluation criteria are used to evaluate the conclusions which decide whether the study is a "real" GT study or not. In the center of the research process are, however, phenomenon and data. Knowledge about the phenomenon is the objective, and, therefore, the researcher uses the phenomenon to guide the data collection. Data are collected to get insight into and knowledge about the phenomenon in order to elaborate a theory. The construct of a theory on the phenomenon can, however, only take place in close relation to data, as the theory must be grounded. Consequently, data verify the phenomenon—or to be precise the theory about this. Thus, GT studies are guided by both phenomenon and data, as the phenomenon controls the collection of data, and data verify the theory on the phenomenon. Otherwise the theory is not grounded.

The Humanistic Inquiry

In marketing we often borrow concepts, models, and theories in order to get a more thorough insight into a certain phenomenon. The consumer behavior theories have imported a number of psychological models which later on are often also used in business-to-business marketing. On one hand the borrowed plumes have contributed to filling in the gap in some very sparsely grounded models. On the other hand, however, it is problematic that to some extent there has been a liberal view of the problems that are attached to the import of another theory based on another paradigm than the theory or model which has got new life and content through the import of theory. Hudson and Ozanne (1988, p. 508) put it in the following way: "But dangers exist. If one ignores guiding assumptions, problems may arise, in the process of research and in the achievement of goals. We are a discipline that borrows. A major hazard of borrowing can be the lack of awareness of the assumptions to which these borrowed theories and methodologies adhere. For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, Freudian psychoanalytic theory was borrowed to explain consumer motives for buying. However, this motivation research did not progress far."

The same fundamental problem is evident in accordance with methods that are not based on the neo-positivistic paradigm which is salient within the business literature that is dominated by North American contributions. The humanistic inquiry builds on an alternative paradigm. The roots of the humanistic inquiry can be found in the paradigm (Husserl, 1962) and in social science more broadly (Morgan, 1991; Geertz, 1973). The method is based on a hermeneutic paradigm. We will, therefore, subsequently

emphasize a number of characteristics at the hermeneutic paradigm ideal which lies behind the humanistic inquiry and controls the shape and use of the method.

The Humanistic Inquiry's Basis in the Paradigm

At a superior level the central part of the humanistic inquiry—as Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Hirschman (1986) describe it—is that the researcher has to get a "native view" by studying the individuals' reality with the purpose of increasing the understanding of a certain phenomenon. Put in another way: to get an understanding of other individuals' real perception of a phenomenon by looking at the reality through their glasses.

This demands closeness, authenticity, and honesty from the researcher in his approach. Thus, the researcher cannot study his phenomenon by keeping a long distance from it and never getting in touch with it in some way or another. It is especially important to study the phenomenon as it is perceived by individuals close to or part of the phenomenon. For example, the salesmen who effect the sales cannot analyze an efficient personal effort independently. The researcher has to be close to the salesmen and try to reflect their way of experiencing reality. Deshpande (1983) writes "The qualitative methodology further believes that a complete and ultimately honest analysis can only be achieved by actively participating in the life of the subject of observation and gaining insight by means of introspection." As we mentioned earlier, this kind of methodology is based on anthropological tradition where a strong emphasis is placed on the researcher's ability to "take the role of the other" and to grasp basic underlying assumptions of behavior by seeing the "definition of the situation" through the eyes of the participant" (p. 208).

Focal for humanistic inquiry is the understanding of the way in which others experience a given situation. "Introspection" is a tool to reach such a cognition. Introspection is a process where the researcher by meditating tries to relate to a certain phenomenon. In other words we are talking about the intellectual processes which are often disregarded during the research process. An essential difference between the humanistic inquiry and methods which are attached to positivism is the aim of the study. In humanistic inquiry understanding is both the immediate and the ultimate goal. Hirschman (1986, p. 238) finds that "inquiries are 'directed' toward the development of ideographic knowledge." The search for understanding is, however, controlled by the researcher's purpose of reaching an understanding: "what we do in coming to an understanding—is to impose an intelligible structure of discrete events upon the continuous stream of occurrence: we do it in the way that it is most useful for our purpose" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 152).

Insight in the problems is an important part of the central goal—understanding. The insight must be of a certain kind, that is, an insight into the conceptual worlds of the actors. The aim is not to search for input for an advance frame or model, but—according to the core of hermeneutics—to build up an understanding which enables the establishment of an individualized frame of understanding. In this

way the mapping of the individuals' own conceptual world becomes the central examining unit. Thus, the individuals are both research unit and central data source. What is experienced, how it is experienced, and the importance that is attached to the experienced are main elements in creating understanding. At the same time the individuals themselves are the source of information, from where the information, including the problems about them, is to be found.

The collection of information is made in a close dialogue between researcher and individuals. The basis of the dialogue is, however, that the researcher is not a superior person compared with the individuals. It is a very open dialogue the purpose of which is to describe the individuals' experience of the situation preferably in their own words, as the researcher's words will often be loaded with certain conceptualizations and associations. The problem is not solved by using the interviewed persons' own words, but it will often cause a thorough dialogue on how to understand the formulations and phrases that they use. The individuals' experience of the interpretations that a researcher tries to apply to the gathered information is essential. Credibility is very much gained when the individual finds that he can rediscover himself in the interpretations and descriptions.

The researchers' success in reproducing the individuals' conceptual worlds depends on their ability to enter into the situation and identify themselves with it. Empathy is made up of more layers. The ability to understand the used words and their facets is one layer. The ability to see oneself as the person with whom one enters into a dialogue is another layer. Finally, one's analytical and intuitive abilities for understanding the collected data is a third layer. To be able to do this and be critical toward it is an introspective process which leads on to a given understanding, and which will control how far you get in your cognition. The interaction and the introspection processes will be unique and rather subjective, as they will not be verified by repeating the processes. Based on the hermeneutic research ideal this is, however, not a problem, as reality to a larger extent is subjectively experienced than objectively demonstrated (Gadamer, 1960; Hekman, 1984).

A final, central characteristic of hermeneutics as a basis of the humanistic inquiry is the fundamental understanding of reality which is attached to hermeneutics. Reality is attached to the individuals' experience of this reality. Originally, hermeneutics consisted of interpretation theories which were attached to linguistics and how words could be interpreted (O'Shaughnessy, 1989). Characteristic of hermeneutics is the search for connections and overview. The aim is, of course, action, but action reached by the individuals themselves as a consequence of changed understanding. Thus, the actions will be subjective, meaning that they will be based on the individuals' own (changed) perception of reality. Hermeneutics often distinguish between understanding, interpretation, and application. In this connection understanding is attached to understanding a given phenomenon, that is, the relations that exist. It is, however, also a question of purpose—the purpose behind occupying oneself with and describing a phenomenon in a certain way. Interpretation is a kind of translation into a language which is understood by

the "audience," the group, or others to whom you want to communicate the understanding. Application expresses the purpose that a researcher has when using understanding to decide, for example, what actions should be implemented in a given situation. Hermeneutics assume related entities in which action can be taken, and/or which can be affected by actions.

The methods managerial implications will be on will be a procedural level rather than a level where specific instructions are given, though the researchers role will be to guide a learning process as opposed to offering managerial solutions.

Evaluation Criteria

Lincoln and Guba (1985) mention four evaluation criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility can be gained by confronting the actors with the achieved results. In this evaluation of credibility the actors' own perception has as much importance as the researcher's perception of the results of the study.

The results of such a study cannot be transferred. However, Hirschman (1986, p. 245) mentions that "The transferability of an interpretation to a second setting is thus knowable only on a post hoc basis; it cannot be assessed prior to the construction of the comparative interpretation." In other words, it is transferability of method experience and the kind of understanding that has been reached. The results do, however, always depend on who completes the study, and the interaction that takes place during the different steps. One researcher cannot be expected to reach exactly the same results as another researcher. Thus, some results will be specific for one specific study. Such results are called "intrasubjective results" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The character of the results touches another fundamental question: Conclusions must always be accepted by a research society, and conclusions will not be recognized, if it does not in some way appear, how the results have been produced. "The methodological log" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is the humanists' suggestion for a procedure that creates an opportunity of rejecting an assertion that conclusions are not based on hallucination or illusion. The methodological log is a description of the procedure which has been followed and has controlled the entire development of the research process. In the methodological log the description of the research process especially emphasizes how the different techniques used in the process may have affected the results. Further, there are demands for confirmability which, in principle, are demands for consistency and consequent explanation of how the conclusions of the study have been produced. Using the previously mentioned protocol is a way of lifting this burden of proof.

Lincoln and Guba's evaluation criteria have some points of resemblance with positivism's demand for "internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity." The way in which Lincoln and Guba have described the four mentioned criteria may be seen as an adjustment to the demands that positivism makes. Lincoln and Guba's description of criteria can also be perceived as a trans-

Table 1. The Qualitative Method's Paradigmatic Characteristics

	The Case Study Method	*GT*	*The Human Inquiry*
Paradigm	Positivistic	Neo-positivistic	Hermeneutic
Researcher's Role	Reproduce/Depict	Categorize	Empathy
Methodological Procedures	Analytic	Coding	Interpretive
Methodic	Hypothetical-deductive	Inductive, Theory generation?	Inductive, Descriptive
Data Collection Methods	Interview (documents, observations, artifacts)	Interview, Dialogue	Dialogue as part of the field
Purpose	Explanatory, Exploratory, Descriptive	Explanation	Understanding
Guidelines for the Research Process	Normative Propositions	Phenomenon and Data	Interaction between the researcher and the "respondent"
Sample	Single and organizations	Phenomenon	Person(s)
Character of the Theory	Causal (How, Why)	Relations and Patterns	Insight
Criteria for Judging the Quality	Objectivity	Relevance Acceptance	Credibility Trustworthy

lation of the humanistic inquiry's criteria into a language which is well-known to most researchers in social science—including marketing.

In the table we have summarized essential scientific and methodological characteristics of the three approaches. The table will not be commented on further here, but it will be used for comparing and evaluating the three approaches after the qualitative methods in action have been discussed in the following section.

APPLIED QUALITATIVE METHODS

As appears in Table 1 the three methods have different characteristics which means that they differ in the way they study the same problem. Therefore, in this section we intend to illustrate this by a study of the same subject using three qualitative study methods.

When one has to describe how the three studies "are used in practice" it is natural to let studies already carried out illustrate this. The essential purpose of this paper

is, however, to compare the three methods, and it is, therefore, problematic to use studies which have already been carried out. If these studies are to be used they must all deal with the same superior problems which are studied in the same context at the same time by the same researcher. If these demands are not met, it will be difficult to find out if differences stem from the applied method or are caused by differences in the examined problem. The ideal procedure would be to carry out three studies of one common, superior problem. This procedure would, however, also make it impossible to compare the data analysis of the three methods in a specific way. It would probably not have been possible to identify data sequences which could have been compared immediately, as the theoretical approach of the three methods in spite of the common, superior problem would differ in framing the research questions.

Instead we chose a joint, simultaneous collection of data, where each of the three researchers was to represent one of the three methods. It can always be discussed which specific data collection method is ideal for this purpose. Here we chose a personal interview. Having determined the superior subject we identified an interview person who had personal experience with the subject and who seemed to be able to manage a confrontation with three interviewers.

The Data Example: Architects and Marketing

The Superior Subject

As subject for a joint interview we chose "marketing orientation—the manager's perception versus the academic contributions." The question is whether practicians' understanding of a subject matter reflects the academic world's understanding of the same subject matter. From several points of view an illustration of this problem can be interesting. The goal may be to obtain an understanding of the differences between laymen's and academics' perception of the same concepts. The interest might also originate in a desire to illustrate the connection in perceptions and subsequently to suggest how academics can better help practicians in their everyday life. In order to make a specific study possible the superior subject was limited further, as "architects' perception of marketing" was chosen as subject matter for a closer study.

Irrespective of the choice of method the theoretical basis of the researchers will affect what questions to ask, how answers should be analyzed and understood, and so forth. In the Case Study Method theories are the basis of the propositions which are to control the studies. In GT the creativity and the theoretical sensitivity will depend very much on the researcher's theoretical ballast, and in the humanistic inquiry the researcher's theoretical understanding will influence the interpretation of the dialogues. A short presentation of the theoretical context of the example study will therefore be appropriate.

Marketing for architects is treated under the heading "perception of marketing in professional services firms." In professional service companies marketing obviously often plays an insignificant role (Schriener, 1990a, 1990b; Morgan, 1991; Feinberg, 1989; Coxe, 1990; Wilson, 1972). This is obvious if the understanding of marketing is focused on survey market analyses and a 4P-marketing-mix. It is different if the starting point is industrial marketing and service marketing which emphasize relations, interaction and network. Here it is possible—at least from a theoretical point of view—to explain why marketing also must be expected to play an important role for most professional service companies (Cova, Mazet, & Salle, 1993; Cova, Damgaard, & Mazet, 1993; Fonfara, 1989; Jansson, 1989; Hardy & Davies, 1983; Eccles, 1981; Mattsson, 1973). According to "industrial marketing perspectives" and referring to the situation of the professional service companies, it can be argued in theory that architects should consider their "marketing orientation." Academic theorizing differs, however, often from the understanding and management theories of practicians. In relation to the purpose of this paper it is interesting to examine the perception of managers in professional service companies, both with regard to marketing as an abstract concept, but also more specifically as what is perceived as marketing activities.

The Joint Data Collection

For both the case study, the GT researcher and the humanistic "researcher" the joint data collection that we chose to be able to compare the three methods was based on the superior problem: "What does marketing mean to architects?" On the basis of this superior problem an architect was interviewed. In the first part of the study, in preparing the first data collection, we realized that planning and framing the study will be marked by the applied method perspective. The research question which characterizes the first data collection will differ in the three methods, among other things because the purposes of the methods differ (see Table 1). As appears later on the interview for the case study researcher is guided by a superior proposition: "How and why do architects hinder the implementation of the marketing concept?" The GT researcher uses the interview to examine the phenomenon of marketing seen from the architect's point of view and he asks the question: "What is architects' perception of marketing and their marketing activities?" In a humanistic study the superior problem could be formulated in the following way: "The purpose is to gain insight in the architect's understanding of marketing."

The progress and content of the interview will depend on the research question as well as the methodological guidelines that a researcher follows. We had to deal with this problem as we found that comparing the use of the methods in practice would be more interesting if the same data were used in all three cases. Therefore, the interview is structured in accordance with the methodological purpose. It was necessary to collect data in such a way that all three method perspectives could be tested. Of course, this caused an artificial interview situation. Firstly, because we were three

interviewers for one interviewee. Secondly, because an open and unstructured interview demanded by an introspective approach is difficult to combine with the more structured and theoretically controlled case study approach. Obviously, the interview was a success—maybe because each interviewer was given one methodological approach and because the interview followed the guidelines below.

We chose to structure the test interview in the following way:

1. The first part was very open, and it was geared to interpret data in accordance with a humanistic approach.
2. An amplifying part, controlled by an interview guide, which may increase the possibility of working with coding as described by the GT method (see Appendix).
3. A more theory controlled part which suits the Case Study Method's perception of how to use existing theory as state of the art or knowledge (see Appendix).

This structuring enabled us to work with data from all three methods' perspective. By starting with the humanistic inquiry's very broad questions and not the more specific questions of the Case Study Method, empathy, demanded by the humanistic inquiry, and grounding, demanded by GT, became possible. If the interview had begun with the questionnaire of the Case Study Method, the interviewer would, according to GT and humanistic inquiries, have influenced the interviewee too much. In the Case Study Method the specific questions are the rule, but it is not a problem to start with broad questions, as long as the specific questions are posed as well. In this case some of the answers to the questions from the questionnaire could come naturally, and if they do not, the "case researcher" only has to follow up later on in the interview and ask the prepared questions.

In the remaining part of the paper we only use the first data sequence from the interview with the architect. We followed this procedure, because already this data piece made it possible to exemplify the central aspects of using the three methods in practice. The interview in full is, however, background material for the analysis and description of the three method approaches. Interview questions and answers will be presented in connection with each method. Based on the description in section 2 it is obvious that primarily at the beginning of the study it is possible to produce data which can appear in both the case study, the GT studies, and the humanistic studies. The longer the studies progress the bigger the difference between the three method approaches. This applies for the content of the question and the way in which it is asked. We will revert to this aspect in section 5, "Conclusions."

Based on the interview extract the research process is described in general and specifically as it is designed which again depends on if it is a Case Study, GT, or Humanistic inquiry approach. It is worth emphasizing that the extract is only included in order to exemplify and illustrate how analysis and interpretation can take place dependent on the method perspective. Thus, it is not included as a spe-

cific study of the subject matter. This would also have demanded a number of other interviews and data collections than the single interview we have carried out here.

Preparation, Collection and Analyzing in Qualitative Studies

The Case Study

As described in the presentation it is emphasized that thorough considerations must be made as to what relevant theories are to be included and what propositions can be established before the data collection is started. This is especially the case when the studies are explanatory. Before the interview was carried out the case researcher therefore had to study literature and put forward a superior proposition on the problem. Under the common heading "What does marketing mean for architects?" the study was controlled by the following superior proposition.

How and Why do Architects Hinder the Implementation of the Marketing Concept?

This proposition came from literature which showed that employees and managers in architectural firms were often negative toward marketing. The literature included many of their arguments, for example, the fact that the architect cannot create architecture on the basis of customer investigations. He must follow his own understanding of architecture. Other contributions focused on the fact that there are many personal contacts to customers and other interested parties which make marketing irrelevant for architects (Feinberg, 1989). The proposition must be seen in continuation of the experience on the subject which is presented in the literature.

It is recommended to carry out a pilot case study before a real case study is started. In this pilot study the protocol, which is a central clue, is tested. "A case study protocol is more than an instrument. The protocol contains the instrument, but it also contains the procedures and general rules that should be followed when using the instrument" (Yin, 1989, p. 70). The protocol is to guide the researcher and thus secure the reliability of the study. The protocol must contain a general description of the problems and purpose of the study. Procedures for data collection must be described. It must for instance be stated to what extent interviews, studies of documents, and so forth, are to be used in the information retrieval. What questions are to be asked, how they are to be included, and, finally, the guidelines for the final report must be determined in the first protocol. The Appendix shows the questionnaire which is a central part of the protocol.

The concepts in a case study must be clearly *defined* in relation to the existing literature. The study should not be directed towards a definition of the used criteria, but should be guided by the problem as it appears from the propositions. Thus the causal relation between the concepts as *variables* is the focus of the study. The concepts must be defined before the data collection begins.

The first protocol that is drawn up cannot necessarily be used for the real case study. Through pilot case(s) both theoretical and methodological aspects are tested before the final study is started. A greater understanding is reflected in new or changed questions, other collection methods, and so on. Not until then is it recommended to carry out the case study. Pilot cases were not used in this particular case because the purpose was to compare the three methods by using the same data.

Conducting Case Studies

Six sources of evidence are suggested: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. In this paper we limit ourselves to interviews as data source. In a specific study this is not regarded as sufficient for a case study. The following interview extract has been chosen for exemplification and discussion of the methods in action:

Interviewer: At first I want to ask you what you think when we mention the word architect and the word marketing?

Interviewee: To be an architect you must have a marketing function. Things are no longer the classic way where the architect is a bohemian artist. You know this caricature of the 1950s who wore plush trousers and a French beret and things were quite easy. They were once easy, weren't they? At that time the architect's job was quite clearly defined, also his market share. Much has happened in history from the 1950s up through the 1970s until now. Yes, where the very reconstruction of the building part from trade to building industry quite obviously—not intentional from the architects—but naturally we knew what happened. Because of this reconstruction we lost—the whole building process was changed, and with it the role of the architect.

In the above-mentioned example the question is formulated in a more open way than it would normally be. This is only due to the fact that the data in this article must be used as example in the two other methods. The open and broad character of the question must secure that the researcher does not control the interviewee. In connection with a case study the question will be more direct and closed, and the interview will be more structured because it is controlled by the a priori advanced propositions. Yet, the interview extract can be used to present data analysis in a Case Study Method perspective.

Analyzing Case Studies

In case studies one has to formulate a superior strategy and specific ways according to which evidences should be analyzed. "Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study.... every investigation should start with a general analytic strategy—yield-

ing priorities for what to analyze and why" (Yin, 1989, p. 105). The most preferred strategy is to follow the propositions which lead to the study. This type is close to the hypothesis test of the positivists. The other possibility is to make a case description, but this is only preferred in situations where it is impossible in advance to make propositions about the examined problem. Three specific techniques for analyzing are emphasized: pattern-matching, explanation-building and time-series analysis (Yin, 1989, chap. 5).

The data sequence can be used to illustrate explanation-building. In the answer to the interview we can find some of the reasons why architects might be expected to hinder implementation of the marketing concept. The interviewee says that "things were once easy" for architects. If this answer had appeared in a case study interview it would have caused a further collection of data to confirm or deny the truth of the assertion. After interviewing the architect we tried to compare the result with another documentation. It might have been historical material. One could imagine historical material for tenders, from which it could appear that architects were sought out and engaged by a developer who in this way had the initiating role. From newspaper articles it might appear that previously there was a shortage of architects, which again appeared from the fact that the developers' trade association demanded education of more architects. The logical analysis of these data would be that previously it was not problematic for architects to get a job, and therefore they did not have to use marketing activities. Thus, the reason why architects today hinder marketing may be that it has not been necessary before and that there is no tradition for using marketing.

The interviewee also mentions the change from craft to industry. He suggests that in spite of increased building this has lead to fewer jobs for architects. Getting a job might be one of the reasons why architects have been forced to initiate new building, and this could increase the pressure on the architects to be marketing-oriented. Nothing in the interview indicates, however, that architects hinder the implementation of the marketing concept. On the contrary, it seems that for the interviewed architect marketing offers some opportunities for influencing the division of work in the trade and thus leads to increased earnings for architects. This point of view might cause a revision of the advanced propositions.

In case of a single case study the interview with the architect would go into marketing in depth in connection with one building project. In this case it would also be relevant to interview others who had participated in the building project: engineers, investors, and so forth, and it would be relevant to use feasibility reports and the like to support or test the interviews.

In this connection a multiple case study could be several building projects with the same architect and other participants, but it could also be other building projects with other architects or architect firms. According to Yin a multiple-case study would in both cases contribute to increasing the reliability and the validity of the study.

As mentioned this question is not typical for a Case Study Method. The very broad formulation is characterized by an approach of understanding. If the case

study researcher had formulated a question on the same subject, the wording might have been: Do you have a special department or a person in this company who controls the marketing activities? The precision of the question indicates that as a consequence of the scientific approach in the Case Study Method you a priori know or can define what marketing and marketing activities are—otherwise the researcher can explain it. The purpose of the questions is to find out what the marketing activities are and subsequently why the situation is like that. The Case Study Method researcher expects to find out why certain activities are not carried out, and why a person has not been given special tasks. The questions of the case approach are formulated on the precondition that the interviewee can consider or has an immediate opinion of the problem and the propositions.

To avoid the previously mentioned problems regarding the reliability and the construct validity Yin suggests that three principles of data collection should be used. In a case study an interview will seldom stand alone. The researcher should use multiple sources of evidence. An interview has to be supplemented by documents and participant-observation. It might be that the interviewee is untrustworthy or is of another opinion which differs from the remaining part of the sample. The researcher has to secure the objectivity by means of a data base which contains all collected data. This case study data base is to form the evidence behind the report, written of oral, which finishes the study. Finally, the researcher must secure the "chain of evidence." For the reader of the case study this chain must establish the connection between questions, answers, analysis, and conclusion. Thus, a case study cannot leave it to the reader to analyze what the interviewee means. The researcher has to make this analysis, and he has to show the theories, questions, types of documentation and so forth that the analysis is based on.

The case study is finished by a report which primarily has to present a problem, collection of data, analysis and conclusion in accordance with who is the "task-initiator." The case study data base thus supplements the report.

GT

Generally speaking the coding process and the data analyses are synonyms in a GT study, as the data analysis contains the three types of coding in the coding process.

Types of coding:	Coding is the operation in which data are
1. Open coding	Broken down. Made understandable (categorized)
2. Axial coding	Put together in new ways
3. Selective coding	Used for developing theory

Open coding breaks down, examines, compares, conceptualizes, and categorizes data. For Strauss and Corbin (1990) concepts and comparison between them are the main issue in research. The relation between open coding and concepts is

obvious, as the first step in open coding in fact is conceptualization. Thus, open coding is a dissection of the data to find concepts and categorize these concepts.

Besides, open coding will find the properties and dimensions of the located categories. These are important because they are the basis for establishing connection between the categories and their subcategories (see below on axial coding). Properties are what characterize a category. Dimensions place properties on a continuum.

In axial coding the data, which were broken down in open coding, are put together in new ways by connecting the various categories with their subcategories (i.e., the categories and their properties). Axial coding focuses on specifying a category/a phenomenon by means of the conditions which create it (i.e., the context that it is part of). With more background knowledge about the context of the phenomenon/category the axial coding moves on and looks at the structural context which influences the action and interaction strategies that may be used to reach the goal and the consequences of using the various strategies.

The selective coding takes the last steps toward developing theory by relating the subcategories to the central category (the phenomenon), comparing the connections with data in order to validate these connections, and completing the categories which lack a further sophistication on development.

It is important to emphasize that the phenomenon cannot be explained as isolated. When the researcher inductively derives a theory on the phenomenon, this happens in relation to the factors/variables (the structural context) which interact with the phenomenon in more or (often) less obviously unambiguous connections (cf. axial and selective coding).

The mutual influence between the factors with which the phenomenon interacts emphasizes the theoretical and neo-positivistic basis for GT (see above). The purpose is to find and explain the patterns of which the phenomenon is part and this is done by interpretation.

The interpretation primarily takes place in the three coding forms of the data analysis. Secondarily, it takes place in connection with the introductory interpretation of the phenomenon and research question of the study which, by the way, are interpreted continuously through the whole study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) talk about both initial phenomenon and research question because these are defined through interpretation and re-interpretation during the whole process.

The GT study begins with combining the initial phenomenon with the researcher's knowledge of this from literature. Personal and professional experience lead to the initial problem formulation of the GT study. Based on the problem formulation (the phenomenon) a study design is worked out. This design often consists of interviews or dialogues with key interview persons, as these have knowledge of the phenomenon which the researcher can derive from the data analysis and use when building the theory.

In the current study it is a question of marketing and architects. Marketing is the initial phenomenon, and the problem formulation of the study was framed as follows:

How Do Architects Perceive Marketing, and
How Do They Market Themselves?

In connection with working out the study design and formulating above-mentioned initial problem for the GT study the literature on marketing has been used (especially the literature on service marketing). In addition, the researchers' personal and professional experience from teaching and working with marketing and methodology is used.

The study design of the problem formulation was to interview architects (or rather one architect) in order to find out how the interviewee perceived marketing and how architects in his opinion marketed themselves, their products and/or the architect firm, if this was the case.

The interview in the study design was semistructured, as certain facts regarding marketing had to be examined. These facts were included in the interview guide. At the same time it was, however, essential to offer the architect the opportunity of stating his perception of marketing, and how marketing is performed by architects—if they use marketing at all. Therefore, a certain degree of flexibility in the interview was not only required but necessary if the study should be able to serve its purpose, and the researchers should be able to work out a theory regarding architects' perception and performance of the marketing function.

In fact the semistructured interview, which was used in the specific study, is often used in GT studies, as it is appropriate for solving the above-mentioned paradox in GT studies. GT studies must be in accordance with the relatively strict guidelines that Strauss and Corbin (1990) have set out for them, and at the same time make room for creativity and theoretical sensitivity. The former demands some fixed points in the data collection (the semistructured interview guide), whereas the latter requires a certain freedom for the researcher in the interview situation (data collection) in order for him to follow up on what is expressed in the interview.

As a rule GT studies will consist of several successive interviews in order to gather information and extend the knowledge of the phenomenon. This takes place in the following way: The result of the first interviews is the input of the next interviews, and so forth. The collection of data is stopped when doing more interviews does not provide further insight. Strauss and Corbin (1990) use the concept "theoretical saturation" when a category is exhausted and the following data do not contribute to the category. This applies in relation to GT that the study must be stopped when the "theoretical saturation of each category is reached" (p. 188).

In the specific study the data collection is limited to a single interview, as this was sufficient to serve the purpose of the paper and furthermore facilitates the comparative analysis of the three methods which are central.

The open coding deals with concepts and their connection. The interpretation is therefore directed toward differences and similarities in the existing data material in order to find categories that make sense into which the data can be divided. Here the purpose of the interpretation primarily is to find out what parts of the

data material treat the same questions, and where the differences are. It is, for example, a matter of finding out which of the interviewees' words mean the same, and which words have different meanings.

Regarding the extension and the depth of the data analysis the open coding can take place in many different ways. The data analysis can move from being a word-to-word analysis of the material to being a paragraph-to-paragraph analysis. In the last case there may be great variation, depending on the size of the paragraphs, which may vary from a few lines to several pages. How deeply the open coding treats the categorization will primarily depend on where the examined phenomenon and the analysis are placed in the open coding process, and secondarily on the data. This means that the extension of the open coding depends on the phenomenon of the specific study. A word-to-word analysis is, therefore, not only made when the amount of data is limited, as the depth of the analysis depends on data available about the phenomenon, and where one is in the coding process. The latter refers to the fact that GT studies are often opened with a word-to-word analysis which is replaced by a superior perspective on data and phenomenon in the shape of a paragraph-to-paragraph analysis, when the process and knowledge of data and phenomenon develop.

When the different categories into which the data material can be divided are interpreted, the next step in the open coding is to further interpret the single category to find its properties and dimensions. The task consists of interpreting important (instead of unimportant) properties and dimensions. It sounds self-evident, but it is not nearly as simple to practice as to write.

In axial coding the interpretation mainly has to create connections by interpreting the categories into their context (which is also interpreted). Where interpretation in the open coding concerned categorization, interpretation in axial coding is a matter of interpreting the result of the open coding (the categories) into a connection. Thus, the axial coding interprets the connections in the categories both inwards (in relation to the subcategories), and outwards (the conditions in which the categories exist). On this background it may be said that while the open coding interprets in order to find what is central in the data material (the categories), the axial and the selective coding interpret in order to overview and put what is central into a broader perspective.

The difference between interpretation in the axial and the selective coding is that while the axial coding interprets the categories (especially the central category = the phenomenon) into a context, the selective coding interprets the phenomenon/the categories into a coherent theory. This means that the selective coding interprets in order for the phenomenon and its context to develop into an empirically grounded theory. Thus, here the interpretation is a matter of interpreting a coherent theory and at the same time interpreting the validity of this theory against the data. The recurrent example from the interview material is here used to illustrate the three coding types.

> Interviewer: At first I want to ask you what you think when we mention the word architect and the word marketing?

Interviewee: To be an architect you must have a marketing function. Things are no longer the classic way where the architect is a bohemian artist. You know this caricature of the 1950s who wore plush trousers and a French beret and things were quite easy. They were once easy, weren't they? At that time the architect's job was quite clearly defined, also his market share. Much has happened in history from the 1950s up through the 1970s until now. Yes, where the very reconstruction of the building part from trade to building industry quite obviously—not intentional from the architects—but naturally we knew what happened. Because of this reconstruction we lost—the whole building process was changed, and with it the role of the architect.

In the open coding there is a categorization of data concerning architects and marketing. A word-to-word analysis will not be conducted as it does not seem appropriate in this interview, as the words themselves do not tell anything. But, the metaphors they form are essential categories. A word-to-word analysis would have categories like: plush trousers, French beret, and things were quite easy. Here it is essential that the caricature is a metaphor telling that architects were not occupied with marketing, and that they just let things happen. Architects were architects, and they were not supposed to deal with marketing—an attitude that has not quite disappeared although it is in transition, as appears from the interview extract above. Earlier the role of the architect was only to be an architect, but the architect's role has become more sophisticated today. Compared to the central category, subcategories would, for example, be "the development of the building industry," "change in the business process," or "change in the role of the architect." If slightly simplified these subcategories could be summarized in the category "the historical development."

Thus, the architect's perception of marketing may be seen in perspective starting at a time where there was no (conscious) perception of marketing and moving into a future in which the architect is quite conscious that marketing is an essential part of the job. Today the architect can be found between these two extremes. He is conscious that marketing has to be used, but he thinks that the architect should not occupy himself with it, even though his role is changing in that direction.

The open coding can be summarized in the following way: Architects' perception of themselves as architects and being only that has changed. There is a dawning consciousness that the role of the architect today contains more than merely being an architect. In relation to the perception of marketing this means that it has changed from being nonexistent to being subject to a beginning consciousness.

In the axial coding the perception of marketing and the role of the architect will become a whole when it is related to the subcategories, derived from the above mentioned extract. It appears that the subcategory "the historical development" has been very important for the change in the architect's perception of the role of architects. The architects knew about this development both in general and within the building industry, but they were not aware of the consequences for architects and their role, and therefore they suddenly found themselves in a situation where their role in many respects had been played out or was about to be so. This is due to the

historical development which had resulted in another subcategory "the change in the business process." Further details do not appear from the interview extract. It is, however, a matter of a higher degree of wholeness between the various building jobs which has made it difficult for the architects to be self-contained. Instead the total building project needs an interaction that cuts all (job) demarcations which have demanded a "change in roles" with the architects—and for that matter all the other involved parties. Thus, the axial coding puts the architect's perception of his own role and marketing into a bigger industrial and historical development.

The selective coding then has to go from the interpretation of the axial coding—specification of conditions for changing architects' perceptions—to an interpretation of this in an empirically based category about architects' perception of themselves and marketing.

The selective coding will work out a theory which states that the role of the architects (and their own perception of this) is determined by the development that takes place in the building industry. The phenomenon is thus part of the development pattern of the building industry. Concurrently as the building industry develops in the direction of stronger ties between the various building jobs, the role of the architect will also contain more than merely architectural work. The verification of this theory, in data, is the conclusion: "The whole business process was changed, and so was the role of the architect."

Concerning architects' perception of marketing the above-mentioned interview extract is not satisfactory, as it is not possible to ground a theory about architects' perception of marketing on this extract. This is a category which needs further development, and it became so in the interview (as a whole). Based entirely on the above-mentioned interview extract it can only be verified, that earlier architects did not have a perception of marketing at all. The remaining part of the interview confirms that in spite of the architects' changed role this perception has not changed radically. It seems, however, that the architects rather unconsciously perform various kinds of marketing. They just do not perceive it as marketing, because, in general, marketing still is abusive language among architects.

The Humanistic Inquiry

According to Hirschman (1986) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) the humanistic inquiry consists of four steps. Below the single steps are described as clearly separated and expressing a sequential process, but regarding research the reality is, however, as is often the case, that it may be difficult to separate the phases. In fact the sequential progress will often be an iterative process (Hirschmann, 1986).

Step 1: A Priori Conceptualization

The first step is conceptualization of the phenomenon. It is characteristic for the phenomenon that the researcher has not a priori a clear perception of the phenom-

enon, but that he is searching for an understanding of the phenomenon. Hirschman puts it as follows: "The phenomenon is likely to be envisaged as a large, indistinct mass whose texture, sources of cohesion, and context the researcher wants to learn" (p. 240). An essential part of this understanding of the phenomenon is the researcher's pre-understanding and intention of occupying himself with the phenomenon. The phenomenon expresses an interpretation. When the researcher looks for a conceptualization of the phenomenon, the first interpretation takes place through an introspection and a limitation of the phenomenon. It is, however, characteristic that the researcher tries to interpret as unconditioned as possible, and that he tries—on this step as on later steps—to be open to other interpretations of the phenomenon. Referring to Gadamer, Hekman (1984) puts it in the following way: "understanding is a dialectic process involving a fusion of the horizons of the interpreter and the interpreted" (p. 336).

When, as in this example, the purpose is "to gain insight into architects' understanding of marketing," the consequence is that in this phase the researcher tries to be as open as possible towards the various concepts and their importance, for example, the concepts marketing and architect. The idea is that the researcher should not decide on a certain definition of the concepts in advance, but on the contrary make an active attempt to be open to different perceptions and approaches.

Step 2: Exploratory Investigation

Having decided what to examine, the researchers try to isolate the phenomenon through some preliminary studies. In this phase they must, however, pay attention to the fact that data should not be collected to support a certain model, or an implicit model should not control the procedure. The researchers should, however, pay attention to their own limitations, or put in another way be "receptive to the perceptions about the phenomenon." An essential part of this step is the completion of some preliminary interviews and a visit to the scene of the phenomenon that is to be studied. In excess of the consciousness of the trammels of one's own pre-understanding the researcher reaches an increased understanding of the many facets of the phenomenon in this phase. He tries to collect relevant documents and notes to support perspectives, facets, and statements from interviewed persons.

This phase will among other things consist of some preliminary interviews. The selection of interview persons and documents is made on the basis of a relevance criterion which is founded in the introductory conceptualization of the phenomenon in phase one. In connection with elucidating architects' perception of marketing a preliminary interview was carried out. The following question was asked:

Interviewer: At first I want to ask you what you think when we mention the word architect and the word marketing?

Interviewee: To be an architect you must have a marketing function. Things are no longer the classic way where the architect is a bohemian artist. You know this caricature of

the 1950s who wore plush trousers and a French beret and things were quite easy. They were once easy, weren't they? At that time the architect's job was quite clearly defined, also his market share. Much has happened in history from the 1950s up through the 1970s until now. Yes, where the very reconstruction of the building part from trade to building industry quite obviously—not intentional from the architects—but naturally we knew what happened. Because of this reconstruction we lost—the whole building process was changed, and with it the role of the architect.

Step 3: Personal Immersion in the Phenomenon

Here the purpose is to immerse or better go behind the immediate (cognition) to reach a deep and broad understanding of the different perceptions of reality which are evident in relation to the phenomenon (see the above quotation from the interview). Here it is essential that the researcher believes in his own abilities to elucidate "thoughts, beliefs, values, and the realities constructed by others." Empathy and sensitivity toward others and their situation is difficult and demands that the researcher is aware of his own prejudice and limitations. The procedure which can be used in this phase is as follows: The researcher "undergoes a continual observation→hypothesis formulation→observation→hypothesis revision process (Hirschman, 1986, p. 242). In this process it is, according to Geertz (1973), important to look for connections—both at the very specific level and at a very superior level. Using protocols is a tool for supporting the efforts to obtain an increasing level of cognition. One type of protocol—"theory construction diary"—contains the hypotheses, ideas, premises, and changes in understanding which are part of the research process. The other type of protocol—"methodological log"—is an account of the techniques which are used in the research process and the consequences that the chosen techniques may have had on the results.

In the preliminary interview the architect attached marketing to the role that is played in the division of labor among the parties, the market share, and the earnings. In this phase of the research process the task is to advance some hypotheses on the importance and the connections that the architect observes regarding marketing, division of labor, market shares, and earnings. One of the hypotheses could be that architects look at marketing as a tool which may be used to influence the division of labor in connection with building projects. If such a hypothesis can be supported by the collected data, this hypothesis will, according to the method, reflect the architect's way of perceiving marketing. If this is the case the architect perceives marketing as a tool which can be used to fulfill a certain function. Thus, marketing is not what a marketing theorist will postulate—a way of thinking that, if used, may saturate the architect's own way of thinking, his role, and the way in which building projects are carried out.

Step 4: Construction and Interpretation

It is characteristic for this method that the researcher has been in direct contact with the phenomenon which was to be examined, and this has had some consequences as

to how the phenomenon will finally appear. In the humanistic inquiry this is not perceived as inappropriate but as a precondition for the completion of a solid study. In the last phase the task of the researcher "literally is to crack the code of the phenomenon" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 57).

A case is an often used way to describe the obtained results. On one hand the case is expressive of an interpretation which is to reflect the experienced reality that is attached to the phenomenon. On the other hand the case must also contain some background information on why and how the study has been approached. The role of the researcher is to present the results in the way the individuals perceive them. As mentioned before he cannot do so without influencing the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

By doing more interviews we will try to change the described connections or reject them in favor of others. The concepts marketing, division of labor, building project, market share, and earnings will be described more closely so that the search for meaning, the associations, and the experienced connections can be described better and be used as a basis for a summarizing interpretation.

Finally, it will be described why architects in the specific situation do not want to use marketing in connection with building projects. It will appear how architects perceive the concept marketing and which specific qualities make marketing unsuitable as a tool for increasing the market share in connection with building projects. In the specific case the result is that in Denmark architects are not allowed to market themselves in an active way by means of ads or the like. Furthermore, among architects it is not good form to market oneself in a too aggressive way, and potential builders and investors are expected to react negatively to a much too persistent marketing. Whether it is "true" that they will react negatively to a more comprehensive and planned marketing activity is, however, an open question. In the architect's conceptual world it is obviously so, but these ideas may only be based on the implicit formation ideal which the education as an architect has given the person in question. Part of this formation ideal seems to have been or maybe still is that architects are to fulfill a job in which art/design is important, whereas no importance is attached to commercial functions, including marketing, which may even be experienced negatively.

In other words, the purpose of the humanistic inquiry is to understand the way in which the individuals themselves experience reality, and not some kind of objective reality.

A CRITICAL REVIEW:
COMPARISON OF THE THREE
QUALITATIVE METHODS

Evaluation of the Case Study Method

The main point of criticism against the Case Study Method is that the approach establishes a research process and evaluation criteria which have been developed

over many years in connection with quantitative survey studies. It therefore can be difficult to transfer to studies oriented towards qualitative data.

The research process in the Case Study Method corresponds to the hypothetical-deductive method when focusing on the testing of propositions. The hypothetical-deductive method has been developed within the natural sciences where tangible results of study units at a distance from the researcher are found. Measuring the speed of a car may be characterized in this way.

The problem with qualitative studies, which Yin (1989) also points out, is that they cannot be checked/re-examined. Still, he poses demands to reliability and thus to reproducibility. This can be regarded as a neo-positivistic trait of the Case Study Method. But the same case cannot be examined several times with the same result, although the same method approach is used. As mentioned earlier case studies are not similar to experiments in this respect. When Yin at the same time emphasizes the importance of formulating the used theory in propositions—ahead of the concrete data collection—there is danger of the analysis stating the theories once again and not dealing with what is being examined. Gummesson (1991) refers to this analysis trap as "the Procrustean bed," where "the examined" is stretched or shortened to fit "the bed," which in this case is the theory. Thus, the result of the case study may end up being a reproduction of the propositions put forward. The researcher finds the theory in the data, and in this case has not said anything new about the examined.

With this in mind, it is clear that making general statements based on case studies is very problematic. Yin (1989) uses analytical generalizations as a counterpart to quantitative studies' static generalizations. By keeping a case journal, the researcher is able to define what his generalizations are based on. This procedure may ensure that the result becomes credible, but it does not meet the positivistic requirements which Yin stubbornly states are necessary.

It can be discussed in the report how the researcher has influenced the case, among other things by defining the theoretical understanding ahead of the data collection. But the researcher cannot with qualitative data verify or falsify anything in a cogent positivistic understanding.

Thus, the Case Study Method can be criticized for maintaining a concept of objectivity which demands distance between the researcher and the person being interviewed as well as demanding tangible data, which are not found in qualitative studies.

Evaluation of GT

GT gives the impression that it is both a qualitative and an interpretative method, but when Strauss and Corbin (1990) hold on to the positivistic evaluation criteria it becomes difficult to maintain this impression.

The three criteria for evaluation of GT

(validity, reliability, and credibility; assessment of the process that generates, elaborates, and tests theory; and assessment of empirical basis—is the theory grounded?)

put forward by Strauss and Corbin (1990) can be criticized.

The first point is if not self-contradictory then ambiguous. The first two concepts are commonly understood as positivistic, but the last positivistic concept's operationality has been replaced by a more relativistic concept—credibility. For the study to be credible, the researcher must show that the research is sensible, while the two first concepts imply that the study must be able to be repeated with the same result. This demand is difficult to fulfill especially in qualitative studies, and especially if the data collection is based on interviews—which is the case in most GT studies. An interview is impossible to repeat as the interviewed, by virtue of the interview, already has developed his understanding of the subject. The problem of evaluating GT becomes self-contradictory when the positivistic concepts are applied to a qualitative method where creativity and theoretical sensitivity ought to be predominant. If a hermeneutic approach was applied, Strauss and Corbin (1990) should have retained credibility alongside consistency as evaluation criteria instead of undermining the hermeneutic approach by combining credibility with two of the three traditional positivistic evaluation criteria. Strauss and Corbin (1990) end up placing themselves within the neo-positivistic tradition, even though they omit a discussion of their scientific background in the book. (This is in itself a problem for a book concerned with methodical procedures.)

The first point's self-contradictory character is a consequence of the guidelines that must be observed while at the same time giving room for an interpretation of GT studies. Point 1 limits the interpretation of a GT study by letting the two positivistic evaluation criteria have such a predominant role. Point 1 can therefore be criticized for attempting to make qualitative studies objective and depriving them of one of their strongest points—their authenticity.

The second evaluation criterion makes the creative interpretation difficult by emphasizing the importance of a precise use of the guidelines if it is to be a "genuine" GT study. The interpretation is thus limited substantially.

The third evaluation criterion ensures the empirical basis and is the crucial point in all GT studies. The question is though, if grounding the theory in empiricism is undermined by the two first evaluation criteria, then it can be stated that Strauss and Corbin (1990) end up with "a GT that is groundless" (Weick, 1979, p. 26). The strict evaluation criteria deprive the study the possibility of reflecting the data's authenticity and feature. This is sacrificed on the alter of objectivity, guidelines, and procedures.

GT concentrates on the analysis of data and can be criticized for not being as thorough concerning data collecting. This has immediate importance as the collection of data is the basis for both the analysis of data, the study and the possibility of validating the study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) primarily address an audience without much experience in qualitative data studies. Still, they expect the audience to know how to collect data, even though it can be just as difficult as the analysis of data, which they justly give explicit and detailed guidelines for.

Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasize that it is difficult to distinguish between an open and an axial coding, but in our experience it is far more difficult to distinguish between an axial and a selective coding in the practical use of GT.

Selective coding is in a simplified manner the same as axial coding at a higher level of abstraction. Selective coding moves from the concrete composition of data in new ways (axial coding) to the implications of this and the theory that can be developed on this background. In practice axial and selective coding become a coherent process, where the difference between the two coding forms is blurred.

Evaluation of the Humanistic Inquiry

Hirschman (1986) describes the intentions behind the Humanistic inquiry in the following way: "Humanism ... advocates *in-dwelling* of the researcher with the phenomena under investigation. Rather than standing apart from the system being studied, the researcher immerses the self within it" (p. 238). Regarding the results of such a research process Hirschman says: "The outcome of the humanistic inquiry is an interpretation of the phenomenon [where] the investigator must rely on constructing a veridical interpretation—intuition and empathy" (p. 240).

The results of the research process become of the type where the researcher attempts to reproduce the conceptual world of the individual as correctly as possible.

"Humanist researchers and auditors alike acknowledge the constructed nature of their reality, but they want it to be as open and unbiased a construction as possible" (p. 246).

As a consequence research questions are formulated as openly as possible and the researcher avoids influencing the process, although he is aware that it is principally impossible. Compared to the Case Study Method and the GT method this means that the basis as well as the research process is as open as possible, so that "The interpretation should reflect the construal of reality manifested within the phenomenon and not the perspective of the researcher" (p. 243).

Seen from a critical point of view it may seem as though the method is contradictory as it on one hand strives for objectivity but on the other hand cannot fulfill this criterion. The research process can be discussed when looking critically at the method. It consists of four stages with a clear coherence which in practice can be difficult to separate in an unambiguous way (which is otherwise expected). The method takes this into account as it allows moving backward and forward between the stages, if a new understanding makes it necessary. However, it is a weakness that the superior objective is to get in behind "the evident" and understand the actor's experience. It is difficult, though, to distinguish between the actor's and the researcher's experience of a given phenomenon. A well known problem within the field of economy is wanting to observe without influencing and being able to understand without interacting (Hughes, 1990). On one hand the researcher will try to gain an understanding of a given phenomenon from the actor's experience hereof. An openness towards the person being interviewed is necessary to be able to understand the experience. But the open and unstructured procedure does not ensure that it is the understanding of the interviewed that will control the following description, as it is not possible to isolate the researcher's own pre-understanding from the inter-

pretation process. The method's solution to the problem is primarily an indication of the problem and some general instructions about being conscious about own limits and being open toward other people's interpretations of a phenomenon.

Principally, the problem in stage 2 is the same as in stage 1, though with the difference that in stage 2 the preliminary interviews are carried out with the problems in mind that may be connected. These problems are, among others, choosing actors, as well as the risk of choosing actors that will influence the following questions in a certain way. Stage 3 implies a continued refinement of the hypothesis which is formulated in this phase. The strategy is to carry out more interviews with the objective of being able to put forward some well-founded hypotheses, which are used in stage 4 to formulate a coherent and deep description of a phenomenon or situations as they are experienced by the actors. Instructions of method only sparingly describe how far a researcher should go to be able to capture the actor's experience of the situation. The realization that as a researcher one has obtained a coherent cognition in the given situation is only slightly suggested and is described as an ah-ha experience, where a sudden cognition crystallizes. Fundamentally the humanistic inquiry can be criticized for being on the border of business theory. The method does not hinder the text from being pure story—as a native view description.

Estimated according to the paradigm, however, it appears that the method is described in accordance with the positivistic paradigm. The concept of hypothesis and evaluation criteria can therefore not be described as typical for methods belonging to a humanistic paradigm.

The objective of the humanistic inquiry is to capture the meaning or understanding behind what is said, and interpret the interviewed person's underlying understanding. A problem in this connection is that what may immediately be concluded by a text or an interview may not necessarily reflect the attitude of the interviewed. Thus, the perception of the architect's self-understanding as an architect and the lacking importance of marketing, which was current in the 1950s, can still be valid without the architect regarding this as explicit.

Comparative Analysis of the Three Methods

A comparison of the three methods will inevitably concentrate on their fundamental paradigms. This discussion will not be elaborated here, but illustrated by looking at the quotation, which is used in all the three methods in action (section 3) and the way in which documentation is used in the three methods. This refers to Table 1 where the three methods are compared.

The same quotation is used in the discussion of all three methods, but it is used differently and with varied results. The humanistic inquiry uses the quotation as a basis for obtaining cognition of the actor's reality on their premises. Thus, it is an understanding of the architect's reality and perception of marketing which is important—the researcher must so to speak "go native" (Van Maanen, 1988). Based on the quotation, the architects do not regard marketing as an important

part of their daily activities. The architects' perception of marketing is interpreted by us on the whole interview and not only on the quotation.

The architect realizes that there is a certain development in the way architects perceive themselves and their role, and it cannot be dismissed that marketing can become part of a new division of labor. The development in industry has changed the traditional way in which architects are perceived, and made this perception outdated. The architect's perception of his own role is changing, it is less clear and unambiguous than earlier. Therefore the architect cannot dismiss that marketing may become part of the new role. However, the architect has no plans of deliberately letting this (for the architect) unattractive element become part of his new role.

The quotation (representative for the interview) is the empirical basis for the architect's attitude toward marketing in GT. This must be put into perspective by finding a context and pattern, thus forming an empirically based theory. Where the humanistic inquiry is content with analyzing the architect's perception of marketing, GT goes one step further and "objectifies" this perception into a theory—a limited theory but none the less a theory.

Architects' perception of marketing is based on tradition and closely related to the development in the building industry. The disintegration of demarcations in the building industry has resulted in a more varied self-perception regarding the architect's role as the development has caused a break in the traditional demarcations. The metaphor in the quotation illustrates the traditional and outdated perception of architects.

Although there are clear similarities in interpretation and results in the two methods (and the Case Study Method), the similarities should not overshadow the differences, especially not as the use of a short, shared quotation highlights the similarities of the method's results and interpretations.

The differences between the two methods can be seen from the results. It is the intention of the humanistic inquiry to interpret and reflect the architects reality, where GT puts the architect's perceptions of marketing into a context. A theory can be put forward based on the empirical material. Thus, when the two methods interpret some of the same things from the quotation, it is more a reflection of the reproduced empirical data's limited size than a similarity in the analysis of data and the resulting conclusions.

In the Case Study Method the quotation is used to verify or falsify the proposition put forward on architects and marketing: How and why do architects hinder the implementation of the concept of marketing?

The proposition is only partly verified according to the selected quotation. The quotation verifies that architects have not traditionally thought of marketing due to a widespread focus on their own field and competence. When only a partial verification is mentioned it is due to the change that has influenced the architect's role, and marketing can therefore more or less deliberately be edging its way into the role of the architect. The question to the proposition must therefore be whether architects' professional standards and self-perception have hindered an implementation of the concept of marketing. When architect's professional standards are changing it may lead to the marketing concept edging into the architects' role

in one form or another. This means that the theory, on which the proposition is based, gives a good historical picture of architects' perception and use of the concept of marketing, while it is doubtful whether there is support for this as a current picture, or if the theory can be adjusted in order to verify it empirically. The analysis in the Case Study Method would probably give rise to a revision of the propositions, and could thus be an example of how incoming data can make it necessary to go back in the research process, as illustrated in Figure 1. Moreover it can be mentioned that an important aspect which keeps architects from integrating marketing in their role and self-perception is the fact that Danish law prevents architect firms from traditional marketing in the form of advertising.

The Case Study Method approaches the matter in a different way than GT and the humanistic inquiry as the theory is put forward and tested via data, where the two other methods are based on empirical data. The Case Study Method on the other hand uses the empirical data to verify or falsify a theory, propositions and results are theory, and empirical data are merely a tool. The sequence is illustrated in Figure 2.

The Case Study Method approach is based on the method's positivistic ideal of a hypothesis test. The humanistic inquiry has a subjective basis where it is important to understand the reality of the person being interviewed, in this case the architect's perception of marketing. Between these two extremities the neo-positivistic Ground Theory is placed. GT looks objectively at the architect's subjective perception of marketing and puts it into a local and partly general theory on architects' perception of marketing, the theory being empirically based regarding its starting point as well as results.

It has been shown above that the three methods use the same quotation differently due to their different scientific basis. In the same way the documentation of the three methods can be said to have the same starting point, covering a differentiated content and use.

Both the Case Study Method and the Humanistic Inquiry use protocols in documentation but protocols are not the same in the two methods and neither is the use. GT uses protocols, too, but the method is to a lesser degree based on this type of documentation than the two other methods. GT uses diaries, diagrams, memos, and prints of interviews as documentation.

A common trait regarding documentation is that all three methods use different forms of written sources to explain how data are processed and interpreted. This is necessary in qualitative analyses if others are to follow and assess the analyses (consistency in the study).

The way documentation is used varies considerably from method to method. The Case Study Method's protocols contain instructions for how the data analysis should be done. In this way the protocols become a validation of how the method is used correctly and objectively.

The humanistic inquiry uses the protocols to illustrate the process which the researcher has been through to obtain further insight into the reality of the person being interviewed. The protocols become notes that reveal the researchers
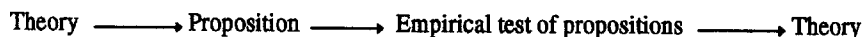
Theory ⟶ Proposition ⟶ Empirical test of propositions ⟶ Theory

Figure 2. The Scientific Process in the Case Method

thoughts and considerations and the resulting interpretations. The protocols give others the possibility of following the researchers thoughts—it is made intersubjective transferable. It becomes possible to estimate sensibility and consistency. According to the humanistic inquiry, this is the way a subjective interpretation of the architect's subjectivity is supposed to be assessed.

GT uses different forms of written material to verify (as in the Case Study Method) and follows the process (as in the humanistic inquiry). This is in accordance with GT being placed between the two other methods. GT, according to its evaluation criteria, demands a verification but at the same time, due to the creative and sensitive element, demands the chance to follow the researcher. Verifications are based on data, and here prints of interviews are used for empirical grounding. Creativity and theoretical sensitivity are expressed in diagrams and memos where new connections are tested and found so a theory can be put forward.

CONCLUSIONS

When Can the Different Methods Be Used?

It is not possible to answer this question unambiguously. This is due to the fact that there is not an endless number of problems waiting to be solved. The formulation of a problem depends on, if not primarily, the researcher's pre-understanding and paradigm. The same phenomenon can be analyzed by different methods, which is also one the article's main points.

We are of the opinion that the three methods each have their areas of strength. Before a more detailed argumentation is put forward, it is important to emphasize the impossibility of a free choice of method.

What background should a researcher have if he is able to choose freely between approaches to methods based on different scientific paradigms?
This question illustrates the need for a researcher to have a deeper understanding of considerations concerning paradigms and methods. This is what the concept of paradigms in reality means. The question also illustrates the problem of thinking that as a researcher you are able to explain your fundamental paradigm—how should you be able to analyze this? If it is not possible to account for your own fundamental paradigm it becomes clear why Kuhn's (1962) concept of normal science apparently has such a strong explanatory value. As researchers we follow the writ-

ten rules but also the unwritten which apply to our normal science. Thus, if our studies are fundamental products of our own paradigm, then the choice of method will be impossible, ontologically speaking. In the following we therefore argue for a choice between different approaches to methods which more or less can be found within the same normal science. The humanistic inquiry may be on the border of what can be called normal science within business, and will therefore only be regarded by a few as a potential method approach. If Kuhn's (1962) line of thought is followed it can be expected that the method will be accepted and adapted to the predominant neo-positivistic approach. It can also be expected that the predominant neo-positivistic method will change due to the influence from, among others, the humanities or that the humanities will disappear again from the business area, considered to be nonscientific.

To the extent a problem has been defined and limited, is it possible to choose an appropriate method in accordance with the subject matter?

We are of the opinion that this is possible to some extent. This will be elaborated in the following. On the other hand this opinion is based on a neo-positivistic ontology, and does not solve the problem at hand—whether the choice of method is a free one or is based on the researchers' paradigm. Or, put in another way, the free choice is in accordance with a neo-positivistic paradigm. According to the positivistic as well as the hermeneutic paradigm, the choice of method is not a free one. It is determined by the research paradigm. And so it is in the neo-positivistic paradigm as well. But here the illusion of a free choice is kept artificially alive. It is argued that the choice of method can be better discussed if the researcher defines his subject matter and what type of explanatory models he uses.

A high degree of tangibility of the subject matter as well as a search for causal relations makes the Case Study Method more suitable for the study. If the subject matter is more intangible and explanations regarding motives are predominant the humanistic inquiry will be more suitable. Somewhere in between is the GT.

The Case Study Method is developed to handle causal and functional relations. This should appear from the above description and is in accordance with the paradigm which the approach is based on. Problems are perceived as a variable that can be explained by other independent variables. The aim of the study becomes, at least in causal studies, to identify the cause of the problem. The nature of the proposition test which the method is based on does however, place certain demands on a preconceived knowledge of possible explanations. The source of this knowledge may be one's own experience or theoretical literature. This means that concepts, models, and theories used in propositions must be defined precisely before the collection of data. Thus, the Case Study Method is not geared to conceptualize problems but from concepts demonstrate causal relations between variables (often concepts). If a researcher wants to use the Case Study Method he must be in a situation with a high degree of agreement on which variables could be potential explanatory variables. Therefore the objective is not usually to develop a theory but to test well-founded propositions. It can be concluded that the nature of the study

must be measurable, in the way that data from interview to documents must be perceivable in relation to already existing concepts. When talking about marketing with an architect it should be defined precisely which aspects of the function or line of thought are in question. If a director in an architect's firm wants to introduce a more marketing-oriented organization the Case Study Method research could be able to show where architects would be a barrier to implementing marketing. The Case Study Method is suitable where functional and measurable relations are identified and explained.

On one hand the Humanistic Inquiry can be viewed as the method furthest away from the Case Study Method. On the other hand the method focuses via its orientation on specific persons that are part of the study's population and in this way is similar to the Case Study Method. It is not the relation between different variables which is important here but an understanding of a person's reality. The objective in the humanistic inquiry, as in the GT, is to understand a certain phenomenon although the research unit is a person. Where GT seeks patterns in data across all interviews, the humanistic inquiry seeks understanding behind the individual answer. In spite of the fact that the humanistic inquiry often uses specific situations to generalize, the method will more or less lead to an understanding of the specific group of people that have been examined. The humanistic inquiry could therefore instead be called "the Humanistic Case Study Method" because it is geared foremost to give an understanding of specific situations.

If a researcher is more interested in understanding the meaning of concepts, events, relations, and so on, this method approach will be more suitable than, for example, the case method. The focus of the study is people's intentions, their underlying motives. The objective of the study is not to test a theory, but to gain understanding and insight. Thus, the method is not suitable for identifying causes of, for example, a missing marketing employee. However, the researcher can via the method obtain an understanding of which ways of thinking characterize the studied, and thus conceptualize important conditions that can be associated with the concept marketing. If the problem implies the formulation of concepts that may increase the understanding of a problem and also be able to define the problem more precisely, then the humanistic inquiry will be suitable. The humanistic inquiry corresponds with GT concerning the method's inability to lead directly to a normative theory. It may lead to new theorizing that can be perceived as perspectives that may have action-related implications. The managers of the architect firm would be able to obtain a conceptualized insight into their employees' understanding of marketing via the humanistic (case) method. This would give the possibility of anticipating the consequences of introducing marketing in the firm.

GT is a method that can be placed somewhere in between the Humanistic and the Case Study Method. However, the method is more generally oriented towards the phenomenon than the two other methods. Causal relations are sought, but contrary to the Case Study Method the subject matter can be characterized by consisting of symbols and meanings and not tangible and functional aspects. The objective of the study

becomes more intangible than the Case Study Method through GT but at the same time relations are sought that may explain causes better than when using the humanistic inquiry. The causes that are sought in GT do not have the same tangible nature as in case studies which can be explained by the fact that phenomena can represent systems where an unambiguous causal relation cannot be established due to synergy effects.

GT conceptualizes the phenomenon—contrary to the Case Study Method's more proposition controlled study. GT cannot lead to a normative theory as the Case Study Method claims to be able to. The intention is to develop theory, not to test propositions or hypotheses. The objective of the study can therefore be to develop concepts that are able to explain how a phenomenon is composed and how it has become the phenomenon it is. Thus, GT can be aimed at both causal and functional explanations as well as explanations concerning motives. It will not be suitable for demonstrating functional relations, but on the contrary geared to handle symbols and meanings. The manager of the architect firm could use GT to conceptualize marketing and find central connections between propositions about marketing and architects. It should be pointed out here that it is not the opinion of the firm's architects, but architects' general perception of the phenomenon. Choice of population for the study would probably therefore be different in a GT study than in a case or humanistic study. GT seeks key informants with knowledge of architects' attitudes where the Case Study Method will ask the persons themselves. The resulting understanding from this kind of study may have implications for management, for example, when working out communication for architects, if the aim is to convince them of the positive aspects of implementing the marketing concept.

The Paper's Basis and Intentions

Three qualitative methods have been described on their own premises and then a number of critical points were subsequently put forward. This procedure can in itself be an expression for a more or less deliberately chosen paradigm. A given text can according to hermeneutics (Gadamer 1960) be analyzed at different levels, when the aim is to understand the text. A text reflects an intention, expresses the author's thoughts and wants to express a certain message to an audience. Finally, the text in itself reflects a certain perspective or a certain understanding.

The objective of this paper is to introduce three different qualitative methods, their demands to use, the results which can be obtained and the strengths and weaknesses of each method. This is done through a description of the methods, application to a case and a critical analysis of the methods. The message behind all this is that qualitative method is not just a weak imitation of quantitative method where there are no clear and restrictive procedures. Qualitative method does have certain procedures and these must be observed if knowledge in the form of intersubjectivity is to be obtained.

In order to render the three qualitative methods on their own premises the description has been carried out within a certain frame of reference. The frame of reference reflects a deliberate choice of the underlying method, which controls the

reproduction of the three methods. The paper's underlying view on method is neo-positivism. This can be traced back to the fact that the methods are described on their own premises which only is possible if the researcher operates within a normal scientific frame, where a neutral reproduction is perceived as a possibility. To what extent is a researcher able to relate to his own frame of reference? This is a central question. Is it possible to describe all three qualitative methods objectively? Will a number of assumptions stay hidden and unconscious even though a researcher is as conscious about himself and his understanding as possible?

As scientific theorists we are of the opinion that we cannot escape our own understanding. On the other hand the paradigm commits the researcher where the basis is the possibility of describing methods within the frame of normal science on their own premises. The pre-understanding of this paper is the neo-positivistic paradigm which is evident in the sense that the method should fit the problem. In that way methods are interchangeable which would not be the case either from a positivistic or a humanistic paradigm.

The way we have chosen to describe qualitative methods has been dependent on who the audience is and thus what can be perceived as the normal scientific area. Large parts of the traditional marketing theory (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988) is founded in a positivistic scientific tradition. If we want to communicate with other researchers of marketing our approach must correspond to the audience's scientific approach. Only in this way can the conclusions of the methods have importance.

The paper should reflect a review of three qualitative methods, which are considered relevant in marketing, and which can generate new and interesting perspectives.

Implications for the Choice of Qualitative Methods

We have presented three well-defined approaches to method within business studies in this paper. In practice it is not necessary to design business studies to one or the other approach. The approaches to method offer, or at least try to establish, a stringent coherence between the scientific, ontological, epistemological, and methodological levels in the study process.

Judging from the criticism of the three methods in section 4, the methodological problems of using qualitative methods are pronounced. This does not mean that qualitative studies cannot be carried out methodologically. It can be concluded that qualitative business studies have a distinctively different problem of method than those business researchers have been brought up with when carrying out survey/quantitative studies. Said in a simple way, the researcher will always have problems of substantiating that qualitative studies are trustworthy. In quantitative studies this problem of method is apparently far smaller because rules regarding operationalization, reliability, validity, and so forth, are far more tangible. By maintaining a rigid quantitative set of rules the possibility of giving a deeper insight into complicated connections (qualitative methods' strong point) is lost.

To obtain a deeper insight and understanding of complicated connections—seeking answers to questions such as why connections are as they apparently are—is exactly the strength of qualitative methods. Unfortunately, search for deeper insight costs methodological precision which is an inherent problem of qualitative methods.

In the Case Study Method this problem is dealt with by maintaining the evaluation from quantitative methods. This is a primary problem as it removes attention from the researcher's role in the study. A researcher must accept that cases based on qualitative data cannot be reproduced. If he tries to go back and repeat a case study the situation will have changed because the researcher has interfered earlier and other conditions in the case setting have changed as well. Other things being equal it is problematic when dealing with qualitative data. Another researcher evaluating a qualitative study will have another prior understanding and therefore not see the same empirical data.

GT method has a corresponding problem as positivistic evaluation criteria are used for the assessment of a study's value. Credibility is new in relation to the Case Study Method and this concept is on paper more suitable for the intangible character of qualitative data. Credibility must be ensured by following a number of guidelines and procedures which constitute the core of GT method, and at the same time is both GT's strength and weakness. If Strauss and Corbin's (1990) guidelines and procedures are followed carefully the focus will shift from doing research to procedures for doing research. The objective of GT is to gain insight of a phenomenon—instead the research time is used on different levels of coding description and procedure descriptions. The positive aspect of GT's focus on working methods is that the researcher can through the working methods ensure a certain intersubjectivity in coding and interpretation of data. He also ensures that theories are based on data and not just a reproduction of the researchers prior understanding. GT's contribution has perhaps in its endeavor for objectivity gone too far in trying to make data tangible. Qualitative data are not at a distance from the researcher but are interpreted by the researcher. If coding and procedure descriptions go too far GT contributors will approach the quantification of the qualitative data the method originally was developed as opposition to.

The humanistic inquiry primarily differs from the other two methods in the following ways: it searches more for problems, acknowledges that different researchers end up with different results, and is more sensitive to the reality of the respondents.

If a researcher wants to carry out qualitative studies, this paper offers different perspectives on how these studies can be carried out so that they meet the paradigm's criteria. To combine different methods can easily lead to evaluation problems.

When comparing the three methods, the choice of method will have consequences for the focus of the researcher: what is perceived as the subject matter, what type of explanation models are sought, and the resulting conclusions. From this it can be concluded that it is not possible to triangulate the methods to please oneself without having consequences for the study's result and direction.

APPENDIX

Example of questionnaire—Case Study Method

1. The company and its business area
   - Which tasks do you participate in?
   - Characterize the company
   - Organizational structure
   - Marketing
   - Who is in charge?
2. Who is the audience?
   - Who is the customer?
   - Who else is interested?
3. Which product is offered?
   - Service
   - How has the business area been chosen?
   - Screening
   - Product innovation
4. Market analysis
   - Are market analyses carried out? How?
   - Scanning of market, scanning criteria
   - Who is in charge, how does it move on inside the company?
   - Is there a customer portfolio list? How was it started? How is it maintained?
   - What is done to get new customers? How is it examined, how are new contacts created? Are there employees that can carry out market research, interview techniques, market analysis techniques?
5. Marketing
   - System of offers?
   - Presentation systems?
   - Sales activities?
   - PR?
   - Advertising?
   - Is market communication adapted to receiver, professor, or layman?
6. Marketing plans
   - Do you have a special department or a person in the company who is in charge of marketing activities?
   - Is there a written marketing strategy?
   - Is there a written marketing plan? Should there be?
   - Who is in charge?
   - Is the distribution of roles in place?
   - How do you evaluate?

7. What is marketing?

        Is it possible to divide marketing analysis and marketing as done above?

        What is your opinion of marketing?

        Should architects market themselves?

        Why/Why not?

        What do others think of.........?

        Sales versus marketing

        Four Ps versus interactive/handling of relations

        Strategy, tactics and implementation of handling of relations

Interview Guide—GT

Examples of categories and sub-categories

Marketing (the interviewed persons' attitude to marketing)

The concept of marketing

Marketing activities/marketing

Market analysis

Communication (with clients/customers and the market)

Contact with clients/customers

Interaction between clients/customers (maintenance of relationships)

Industry

Relations to colleges/competitors (cooperation-competition)

Advantages and disadvantages in relation to colleagues and competitors

The general development in the industry and adaptation/gearing to this

Ways of functioning

Working tasks

Structure

Decision-making processes

Actors (employees)

The company's culture

Limits to what the company can do and will do.

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