

The Concept of Genre
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When students are required to complete a research project as part of their graduate studies, they begin to think about research methods, perhaps for the first time. Practitioners, in particular, may be drawn to qualitative research, but have no clear idea of the procedures they should follow. This is where the concept of research genre can be useful. If this concept seems strange, consider the differences between a novel, short story, play, poem, research paper, magazine article, or newspaper report. Each of these literary forms is a genre with its own distinctive features. The same is true of research genre.

A number of genre fall under the umbrella of qualitative research including:

- Action research
- Case study
- Ethnography/Auto-ethnography
- Personal Narrative
- Grounded theory
- Arts-based inquiry

Depending on the researcher's intent, one genre may be more appropriate than others. Because each genre has its own procedures and form, it is important for students to identify which genre will guide their inquiry.

Conventional wisdom holds that the choice of genre is determined by the issue to be studied. To an extent this is true. However, it does not take into account the students' innate way of making meaning or their particular talents. For example, some students make meaning through narrative and have strong story telling abilities. Others would find this quite strange or lack the writing skills necessary to construct a compelling narrative. One person might study an issue by working within the genre of personal narrative. Another person might study the same issue by working within a different genre such as grounded theory.

How clearly an individual understands and follows the conventions of the genre they claim to be using contributes to their credibility as a researcher and the credibility of their study.