

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS

Comparison of qualitative & quantitative research

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Definitions	a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and give them meaning	a formal, objective, systematic process for obtaining information about the world. A method used to describe, test relationships, and examine cause and effect relationships.
Goals	To gain insight; explore the depth, richness, and complexity inherent in the phenomenon.	To test relationships, describe, examine cause and effect relations
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft science • Focus: complex & broad • Holistic • Subjective • Dialectic, inductive reasoning • Basis of knowing: meaning & discovery • Develops theory • Shared interpretation • Communication & observation • Basic element of analysis: words • Individual interpretation • Uniqueness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard science • Focus: concise & narrow • Reductionistic • Objective • Logistic, deductive reasoning • Basis of knowing: cause & effect, relationships • Tests theory • Control • Instruments • Basic element of analysis: numbers • Statistical analysis • Generalization

Specific qualitative approaches

Phenomenology			
	Purpose, goal - to describe experiences as they are lived		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• examines uniqueness of individual's lived situations• each person has own reality; reality is subjective	
	Research question development		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does existence of feeling or experience indicate concerning the phenomenon to be explored• What are necessary & sufficient constituents of feeling or experience?• What is the nature of the human being?	
	Method		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No clearly defined steps to avoid limiting creativity of researcher• Sampling & data collection	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek persons who understand study & are willing to express inner feelings & experiences• Describe experiences of phenomenon• Write experiences of phenomenon• Direct observation• Audio or videotape
	Data analysis		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Classify & rank data• Sense of wholeness• Examine experiences beyond human awareness/ or cannot be communicated	
	Outcomes		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Findings described from subject's point-of-view• Researcher identifies themes	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural explanation of findings is developed
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Grounded theory		
	Purpose - theory development	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in discovering what problems exist in a social scene & how persons handle them • Involves formulation, testing, & redevelopment of propositions until a theory is developed
	Method - steps occur simultaneously; a constant comparative process	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection - interview, observation, record review, or combination
	Analysis	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept formation • Concept development - reduction; selective sampling of literature; selective sampling of subjects; emergence of core concepts • Concept modification & integration
	Outcomes - theory supported by examples from data	

Ethnography		
	Purpose - to describe a culture's characteristics	
	Method	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify culture, variables for study, & review literature

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection - gain entrance to culture; immerse self in culture; acquire informants; gather data through direct observation & interaction with subjects
	Analysis - describe characteristics of culture	
	Outcomes - description of culture	

Historical		
	Purpose - describe and examine events of the past to understand the present and anticipate potential future effects	
	Method	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulate idea - select topic after reading related literature Develop research questions Develop an inventory of sources - archives, private libraries, papers Clarify validity & reliability of data - primary sources, authenticity, biases Develop research outline to organize investigative process Collect data
	Analysis - synthesis of all data; accept & reject data; reconcile conflicting evidence	
	Outcomes - select means of presentation - biography, chronology, issue paper	

Case study		
	Purpose - describe in-depth the experience of one person, family, group, community, or institution	
	Method	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation and interaction with subject
	Analysis - synthesis of experience	
	Outcomes - in-depth description of the experience	

Data collection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with audiotape & videotape • Direct, non-participant observation • Participant observation • Field notes, journals, logs 	

Reliability & validity - rigor	
Use of researcher's personality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with subject's experience • Live with data collection until no new information appears 	
Bracketing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher suspends what is known about the phenomenon • Keeping an open context • Set aside own preconceptions 	
Intuiting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of actually looking at phenomenon • Focus all awareness & energy on topic • Absolute concentration & complete absorption in phenomenon 	
Can use > 1 researcher & compare interpretation and analysis of data	

Data analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living with data• Cluster & categorize data• Examine concepts & themes• Define relationships between/among concepts

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