

Table I: Distinguishing Characteristics of Different Qualitative Designs

Design	Purpose	Focus	Methods of data collection	Methods of data analysis
Case study	To understand one person or situation (or perhaps very small number) in great depth.	One case or a few cases within its/their natural setting(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Interview • Appropriate documents written and/or audiovisual material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorization and interpretation of data in terms of common themes. • Synthesis into an overall portrait of the case(s).
Ethnography	To understand the beliefs and practices of a cultural group.	A specific field site (e.g. school, organization, community, virtual groups) in which a group of people share a common culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant observation • Semistructured or unstructured interviews with informants • Artefact/document collection • Surveys and questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of significant phenomena and underlying structures and beliefs. • Organization of data into a logical whole (e.g. chronology, typical day)
Phenomenological study	To understand an experience from the participants' point of view.	A particular phenomenon as it is typically lived and perceived by human beings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth, semistructured interviews. • Purposeful sampling of individuals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Search for meaningful concepts that reflect various aspects of the experience. • Integration of those concepts into a seemingly typical experience.

Grounded theory study	To derive a theory from data collected in a natural setting.	A process, including human actions and interactions and how they result from and influence one another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Theoretical sampling in order to saturate theoretical categories. • Any other relevant data sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic method of coding the data into categories and identifying interrelationships. • Continual interweaving of data collection and data analysis. • Construction of a theory from categories and inter-relationships.
Normative Inquiry	To explore rich experiences and stories of individuals.	A set of experiences shared by a few or more individuals across time periods and contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth unstructured and semi-structured interviews. • Autobiographical writings, poetry, and other narrative documents. • Photographs and other visual materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of narrative themes, threads, and tensions. • Reordering of narratives into a coherent chronological or thematic story.
Content Analysis	To identify the specific characteristics of a body of material.	Any textual, visual, or behavioural form of communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and possible sampling of the specific material to be analysed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding of the materials in terms of predetermined and precisely defined characteristics. • Tabulation of the frequency of each characteristics. • Descriptive or inferential statistical analyses as needed to address the research question.