

Compare/Contrast Qualitative and Quantitative Research Strategies

Qualitative	Quantitative
Belief that the world is not stable, coherent and uniform. Rather, meaning is situated in a particular perspective or context, and thus, there are multiple realities, none of which is more valid or true than another. The purpose is to explain and gain insight and understanding of phenomena through intensive collection of narrative data. Generate hypotheses to be tested, inductive.	Belief that we inhabit a relatively stable, uniform, and coherent world (single reality) what we can measure, understand, and generalize. The purpose is to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena through focused collection of numerical data. Test hypotheses, deductive.
Approach to Inquiry	
Inductive, value-laden (subjective), holistic, process-oriented	Deductive, value-free (objective), focused, outcome-oriented
Hypotheses	
Tentative, evolving, based on particular study	Specific, testable, stated prior to particular study
Review of Related Literature	
Limited Does not significantly affect particular study	Extensive Does significantly affect particular study
Research Setting	
Naturalistic (as is) to the degree possible	Controlled to the degree possible
Sampling	
Purposive: Intent to select “small,” not necessarily representative, sample in order to acquire in-depth understanding	Random: Intent to select “large,” representative sample in order to generalize results to a population
Measurement	
Non-standardized, narrative, ongoing	Standardized, numerical, at the end
Design and Method	
Flexible, specified only in general terms in advance of study Nonintervention, minimal disturbance All Descriptive— History, Biography, Ethnography, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory, Case Study, (hybrids of these) Consider many variable, small group	Structured, inflexible, specified in detail in advance of study Intervention, manipulation, and control Descriptive Correlation Causal-Comparative Experimental Consider few variables, large group
Data Collection Strategies	
Document and Artifact Collection Observation (participant, non-participant) Interviews/Focus Groups (un-/structured, in-/formal) Administration of questionnaires (open ended) Taking of extensive, detailed field notes	Observation (non-participant) Interviews and Focus Groups (semi-structured, formal) Administration of tests and questionnaires
Data Analysis	
Raw data are in words Essentially ongoing, involves synthesis	Raw data are numbers Performed at end of study, involves statistics
Data Interpretation	
Conclusions tentative, reviewed on an ongoing basis, generalizations speculative or nonexistent Inferences/generalizations are the reader’s or consumer’s responsibility.	Conclusions and generalizations formulated at end of study, stated with predetermined degree of certainty Inferences/generalizations are the researcher’s responsibility Never 100% certain of our findings.