

## QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE METHODS

For any project it is important to focus on what kind of questions you want to answer before selecting an approach. Bernard (2006) indicates the all data is qualitative, as even quantitative data requires a qualitative explanation. Think through what you are trying to accomplish before you set out a plan for how to collect data and what type(s).

	Qualitative	Quantitative
<b>Purpose</b>	To understand & interpret.	To test hypotheses, look at cause & effect, & make predictions.
<b>Scientific Method</b>	Exploratory or bottom-up: the researcher generates a new hypothesis and theory from the data collected.	Confirmatory or top-down: the researcher tests the hypothesis and theory with the data.
<b>Objectivity and Subjectivity</b>	Subjectivity is expected.	Objectivity is critical.
<b>View of Behavior</b>	Dynamic, situational, social, & personal.	Regular & predictable.
<b>Objectives</b>	Explore, discover, & construct.	Describe, explain, & predict.
<b>Focus</b>	Wide-angle lens: examines the breadth & depth of phenomena.	Narrow-angle lens: tests a specific hypotheses.
<b>Nature of Reality</b>	Multiple realities; subjective.	Single reality; objective.
<b>Nature of Observation</b>	Study behavior in a natural environment.	Study behavior under controlled conditions; isolate causal effects.
<b>Group Studied</b>	Smaller & not randomly selected.	Larger & randomly selected.
<b>Variables</b>	Study of the whole, not variables.	Specific variables studied.
<b>Type of Data Collected</b>	Words, images, or objects.	Numbers and statistics.
<b>Form of Data Collected</b>	Qualitative data such as open-ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes, & reflections.	Quantitative data based on precise measurements using structured & validated data-collection instruments.
<b>Type of Data Analysis</b>	Identify patterns, features, themes.	Identify statistical relationships.
<b>Results</b>	Particular or specialized findings that are less generalizable.	Generalizable findings that can be applied to other populations.
<b>Final Report</b>	Narrative report with contextual description & direct quotations from research participants.	Statistical report with correlations, comparisons of means, & statistical significance of findings.