

Table 4.1 Contrasting Foundational Considerations of Five Qualitative Approaches

Foundational Considerations	Narrative Research	Phenomenology	Grounded Theory	Ethnography	Case Study
Research focus of approach	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing a theory grounded in data from the field	Describing and interpreting a culture-sharing group	Developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases
Unit of analysis	Studying one or more individuals	Studying several individuals who have shared the experience	Studying a process, an action, or an interaction involving many individuals	Studying a group that shares the same culture	Studying an event, a program, an activity, or more than one individual
Type of research problem best suited for approach	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Grounding a theory in the views of participants	Describing and interpreting the shared patterns of culture of a group	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Nature of disciplinary origins	Drawing from the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology	Drawing from philosophy, psychology, and education	Drawing from sociology	Drawing from anthropology and sociology	Drawing from psychology, law, political science, and medicine

Source: Creswell and Poth (2018)