

# Qualitative Methods Toolkit

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*A map of qualitative approaches and how to choose among them — anchored by HRDR's 2023 Qualitative Methods Special Issue and the broader qualitative methodology literature.*

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### Choosing an approach

Qualitative is not one method. Match the approach to what you want to know.

If you want to understand...	Approach	Anchor reference
Lived experience of a phenomenon	Phenomenology	Kuchinke (2023)
How a process/theory emerges from data	Grounded theory	Brandhorst et al. (2023)
Patterns across accounts	Thematic analysis	Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller (2020)
Talk and meaning-in-interaction	Discursive psychology	Lester, O'Reilly, & Steele (2023)
Your own situated practice	(Insider) action research / autoethnography	Coghlan & Holian (2023); Grenier & Collins (2016)

*Not sure? Start with **Zarestky (2023)** — multiple qualitative approaches with a decision tree.*

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### Core reading list (annotated)

#### Design & trustworthiness

- **Lochmiller, Cho, & Lester (2023)** — a **5-domain qualitative design framework** (the planning backbone).
- **Zarestky (2023)** — choosing among qualitative approaches; includes a decision tree.
- **Lochmiller, Cho, & Lester (2026)** — establishing **trustworthiness** in HRD qualitative research.

#### Specific approaches (2023 Qualitative Methods SI)

- **Kuchinke (2023)** — phenomenology and HRD.
- **Brandhorst et al. (2023)** — grounded theory method, post-pandemic.
- **Lester, O'Reilly, & Steele (2023)** — discursive psychology.
- **Discetti & Anderson (2023)** — netnography (online communities).
- **Lochmiller (2023)** — empathy interviews.

- **Li (2023)** — diffractive analysis / post-qualitative inquiry.
- **Gisby et al. (2023)** — rich pictures (visual methods).
- **Coghlan & Holian (2023)** — insider action research.

## Analysis & data

- **Lester, Cho, & Lochmiller (2020)** — learning to do qualitative thematic analysis (a starting point).
- **O’Kane, Ott, Smith, & Brown (2023)** — CAQDAS for qualitative/systematic work.
- **Paulus (2023)** — QDA software for digital workflows.
- **Moore, Aguinis, & Darden (2026)** — **saturation**: 42% use it without defining it; a three-step framework.

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## How this connects

This toolkit pairs with the **Literature Review Methods** guide (for qualitative *synthesis*) and the **SLR Search Coach** (when your review question is qualitative — use the SPIDER framework).

*Source: HRDR "Research Methodology and Theory Building" cluster (2023 Qualitative Methods Special Issue).*

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