### TABLE 14.2  **Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research**

#### Strengths
- Data based on the participants’ own categories of meaning
- Useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth
- Useful for describing complex phenomena
- Provides individual case information
- Can conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis
- Provides understanding and description of people’s personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the emic or insider’s viewpoint)
- Can describe in rich detail phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts
- The researcher almost always identifies contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest
- The researcher can study dynamic processes (i.e., documenting sequential patterns and change)
- The researcher can use the primarily qualitative method of grounded theory to inductively generate a tentative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon
- Can determine how participants interpret constructs (e.g., self-esteem, IQ)
- Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research
- Qualitative approaches are especially responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders’ needs
- Qualitative researchers are especially responsive to changes that occur during the conduct of a study (especially during extended fieldwork) and may shift the focus of their studies as a result
- Qualitative data in the words and categories of participants lend themselves to exploring how and why phenomena occur
- You can use an important case to vividly demonstrate a phenomenon to the readers of a report
- Determine idiographic causation (i.e., determination of causes of a particular event)

#### Weaknesses
- Knowledge produced might not generalize to other people or other settings (i.e., findings might be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study).
- It is difficult to make quantitative predictions.
- It is more difficult to test hypotheses and theories with large participant pools.
- It might have lower credibility with some administrators and commissioners of programs.
- It generally takes more time to collect the data when compared to quantitative research.
- Data analysis is often time consuming.
- The results are more easily influenced by the researcher’s personal biases and idiosyncrasies