PUBLISHING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN I-O PSYCHOLOGY

a panel discussion convened by

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WHY ARE WE HERE?

In I-O psychology, it can be challenging to:

- Design and conduct qualitative research
- Locate qualitative research in I-O journals
- Publish qualitative research
- Review qualitative research
- Identify supportive and knowledgeable mentors, committee members, and collaborators

SESSION FORMAT

- "Lightning round" panel focused on lessons learned + practical strategies
- 20 minutes: 4 discussion questions X 3 panelists
  - Tine Köhler, PhD – University of Melbourne
  - Silvia Bonaccio, PhD – University of Ottowa
  - Joe Allen, PhD – University of Nebraska-Omaha
- 20 minutes: general discussion
- #SIOPQual

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CONDUCTING RESEARCH: What should scholars know when conducting and submitting qualitative research for the first time? What are some common pitfalls and fatal flaws?

EDITORIAL PROCESS: How can we educate reviewers about how to properly assess manuscripts that use qualitative methods? How can editors identify reviewers who are trained to evaluate qualitative work?

REVIEWING + REVISING: How should authors navigate requests during the review process to demonstrate reliability, validity, and reproducibility that are driven by the dominant positivist epistemology in I-O? How can authors instead refocus their demonstration of rigor in the research process on transparency, confidence, and robustness of conclusions?

BIGGER PICTURE: When and how will I-O be ready to leave its narrow ontology, epistemology?

CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

What should scholars know when conducting and submitting qualitative research for the first time? What are some common pitfalls and fatal flaws?

- [SB] time, preparation. Go back to the roots of qualitative methods. Philosophy, epistemology, etc. What 'language' do you want to speak? Be transparent in writing. More first-person writing about positionality, biases, lens, etc.
- [TK] Qualitative methods are not unidimensional -- many methods, techniques, etc., with their unique ontological + epistemological traditions, assumptions, etc. Learn, appreciate the plurality of methods + RQs for which they're best suited. RQ should dictate method, which should dictate data collection. Look out for guides, methods papers, etc. Qualitative methods have been around for a while – will need to look to other fields for history, guidance. It's possible to combine methods but this can be difficult, so be careful + consistent.
- [JA] 'rigor, rigor, and more rigor.' Know what it means to be rigorous in a given methodology, and be able to communicate this in the manuscript.

EDITORIAL PROCESS … #SIOPQUAL

How can we educate reviewers about how to properly assess manuscripts that use qualitative methods? How can editors identify reviewers who are trained to evaluate qualitative work?

- [JA] Educational Training Committee – initiative to improve reviewer education training (both quantitative + qualitative methods) – will help us improve our field, science, etc. Conundrum: I-O journals have not traditionally published qualitative research, so may not have previous contributors who can review qualitative manuscripts. Editors should invite board members with qualitative expertise. Be prepared to educate reviewers, editors (strategically!) during the R+R process. Editors really struggle to identify reviewers. Some journals include a field upon manuscript submission to suggest reviewers; cover letters may not be read (so might not be the best place to recommend potential reviewers).
- [TK] this question implies that onus should be on editors when really it might be better to educate ourselves (as qualitative researchers) how to be better reviewers. We should be courteous, knowledgeable about array of methods (including diverse qualitative methods). Never stop getting more training.
- [SB] editors think of reviewers as a team. Can be challenging to identify a reviewer who is both SME + methodological expert. Again, need more qualitative experts on editorial boards. Are qualitative methods listed in reviewers' / editors' biographical sketches? Also, think outside of North America, where folks have more widely embraced qualitative methods. Could also consider an adjacent field (e.g., SQIP – Society for Qualitative Inquiry in Psychology). Training-wise: APA has training resources, taskforces dedicated to training reviewers, reporting standards, etc. Videos on how to evaluate qualitative research; accessible for non-APA members. Cover letter is important for pointing to the specific methodological approach in a pithy, accessible way (e.g., search terms / concise summary Editor could copy-and-paste + share directly with potential reviewers). Qualitative CL's are longer than quantitative ones.

REVIEWING + RESPONDING

How should authors navigate requests during the review process to demonstrate reliability, validity, and reproducibility that are driven by the dominant positivist epistemology in I-O? How can authors instead refocus their demonstration of rigor in the research process on transparency, confidence, and robustness of conclusions?

- [TK] language you receive can suggest level of reviewer's knowledge about qualitative research (and how much education you may need to provide). They're also giving you feedback about some decisions you need to make more transparent (the concern is valid even if they're not using 'qualitative jargon'). Need to communicate how others could draw the same conclusions as you if able to access data. We might call them credibility, confirmability, transferability, etc. Don't engage with the terms the positivist reviewer is using! (e.g., reliability, validity). We use different language, terms, approaches (which is ok!) – check out, for example, Michael Pratt's editorial for how to practically communicate data + how you arrived at data insights.
- [SB] might need to get at the underlying concern that the reviewer is expressing. E.g., if the reviewer asks for generalizability, you can further contextualize your findings, discuss transferability / boundaries, and perhaps explain why generalizability is not [necessarily] a 'goal'.
- [JA] could explain how / why your results might carry implications for other contexts. Be transparent about this (even if results don't 'fully generalize'). Given strong bias towards positivist approaches, explain analogues to positivist criteria for reliability + validity.

BIGGER PICTURE OF QUALITATIVE I-O

When and how will I-O be ready to leave its narrow ontology, epistemology?

- [TK] When we are! We need to be ready to leave our narrow-mindedness (and educate others how to receive our research).
- [SB] observes similar shifts in other divisions – e.g., APA Div 5 switched from being more strictly quantitative to now embracing mixed-methods (with a qualitative subdivision). Let's move beyond "quiet toleration" [JA]. The messaging is changing (for the better!) in the field of psychology as a whole… but we also can't teach what we don't know. Most I-O programs lack the resources/expertise to teach qualitative methods, but experts are available in other departments (e.g., gender studies, sociology, education, business) for guest speakers, workshops, consultation, etc. Invite researchers known for qualitative work to offer a colloquium talk, guest lecture, workshop, etc. Great start to engage in this conversation when department lacks resources for more full-fledged efforts. Lots of great qualitative methods handbooks in the library + online (APA free resource library).
- [JA] membership has demanded greater methodological inclusion. We should also strive to be methodologists—be willing to try new things, bridge mixed methods.

GENERAL DISCUSSION #SIOPQUAL

See our crowd—sourced resource guide for a bibliography of helpful readings

Challenges:

- Improving the image of qualitative research in our I-O field
  - Graduate methods courses should assign qualitative methods articles. Communicate that quantitative research is not a panacea for all types of research questions, knowledge-creation, theory-building, etc.
  - Might be witnessing a groundswell effect too – increased awareness, training about how to conduct, publish, review qualitative research
- Pursuing a qualitative dissertation
  - Doesn't necessarily take longer – students get distracted regardless ☺
  - Might need to be proactive about seeking resources, guidance, mentors, collaborators, etc.
  - Can publish many papers from the same data collection effort. Could be easier to combine data with other datasets, even datasets from other collaborators
- Navigating qualitative researcher as a junior faculty (given how long this research takes!)
  - Doing quantitative work can help maintain research progress under time constraints – some projects are a 'labor of love' (qualitative? Self-actualization!) whereas others might 'meet a need' (survival!)
  - Qualitative software can occasionally expedite research (albeit less inductive)
  - Slice big datasets into smaller RQs