Quality in qualitative research

- **Research as following 'rules': being constrained by methods**

- Research as 'craft': being pragmatic with methods

- A framework for a pragmatic approach

Qualitative research: approaches (and 'brands')

- **Thematic analysis** ('Grounded Theory', 'Framework Analysis', 'Content Analysis', 'IPA',…)

  Identify recurrent patterns in the data

- **Language-based analysis** ('Conversational Analysis', 'Discourse Analysis',…)

  Focus on what talk is 'doing'

- **Ethnography**

  Focus on culture – systems of meanings & values & ways of living

- **Narrative analysis** ('Narrative analysis', 'Life History Analysis',…)

  Focus on chronological unfolding of a story

2   Pistrang & Barker, APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology 2012

93 papers on quality assurance in qualitative research

Reynolds J et al, *Health Research Policy and Systems* 2011;**9**:43

Consolidated criteria reporting qualitative research (COREQ) - 76 separate checklist items

Tong A et al, Int J Quality in Health Care 2007; 19:349-57

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Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research: A Synthesis of Recommendations

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Table 1

Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR)[a]

No.	Topic	Item
Title and abstract		
S1	Title	Concise description of the nature and topic of the study Identifying the study as qualitative or indicating the approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory) or data collection methods (e.g., interview, focus group) is recommended
S2	Abstract	Summary of key elements of the study using the abstract format of the intended publication; typically includes background, purpose, methods, results, and conclusions
Introduction		
S3	Problem formulation	Description and significance of the problem/phenomenon studied; review of relevant theory and empirical work; problem statement
S4	Purpose or research question	Purpose of the study and specific objectives or questions
Methods		
S5	Qualitative approach and research paradigm	Qualitative approach (e.g., ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenology, narrative research) and guiding theory if appropriate; identifying the research paradigm (e.g., postpositivist, constructivist/interpretivist) is also recommended; rationale[b]
S6	Researcher characteristics and reflexivity	Researchers' characteristics that may influence the research, including personal attributes, qualifications/experience, relationship with participants, assumptions, and/or presuppositions; potential or actual interaction between researchers' characteristics and the research questions, approach, methods, results, and/or transferability
S7	Context	Setting/site and salient contextual factors; rationale[b]
S8	Sampling strategy	How and why research participants, documents, or events were selected; criteria for deciding when no further sampling was necessary (e.g., sampling saturation); rationale[b]
S9	Ethical issues pertaining to human subjects	Documentation of approval by an appropriate ethics review board and participant consent, or explanation for lack thereof; other confidentiality and data security issues
S10	Data collection methods	Types of data collected; details of data collection procedures including (as appropriate) start and stop dates of data collection and analysis, iterative process, triangulation of sources/methods, and modification of procedures in response to evolving study findings; rationale[b]
S11	Data collection instruments and technologies	Description of instruments (e.g., interview guides, questionnaires) and devices (e.g., audio recorders) used for data collection; if/how the instrument(s) changed over the course of the study
S12	Units of study	Number and relevant characteristics of participants, documents, or events included in the study; level of participation (could be reported

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- "He [Goffman] felt very strongly that you could not elaborate any useful rules or procedures for doing field research"

Speaking of Erving Goffman (Becker H. *Symbolic Interaction, 2003;*26:659-69)

"Research is in large part a craft learned through personal experience of doing research and from an appreciation of what is good in other people's research […]. Quality […] does not depend on unthinking adherence to rules of method […] but exposure to methodological debates can help loosen thoughts that are stuck"

Seale C, *The Quality of Qualitative Research* 1999;London: Sage

Methods in qualitative research as vantage points, not rules?

Pragmatism in qualitative research

Critiques of disciplinary purity

- 'Methodological tail wagging scientific dog' (Barbour, BMJ 2001;322:1115)

- 'Methodolatry' (Chamberlain, J Health Psychol. **2000**;5:285-96)

Models of diversity

- Diversity in methods (Malterud, Lancet, 2001; 358:483-8)

- Methodological pluralism: 'all methods have their uses' (Frost, Qualitative Research in Psychology, OUP, 2011)

Quality in qualitative research

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- **A framework for a pragmatic approach**

A framework for a pragmatic approach

Identify recurrent patterns in the data

Attend to how language is used in the social context

Attend to what is 'normal' in that setting

Put into context of the whole account or interaction

A framework for a pragmatic approach

Standards	(Terms associated with qualitative research)	Function
Framing		Show the research has a purpose in the context of what is known
Reliability	Procedural trustworthiness	Ensure respect for procedures
Validity	Trustworthiness of the findings	Ensure respect for findings
Generalisability	Transferability	Results are useful to another scientist /practitioner
Objectivity	Permeability / trustworthiness of the researcher	Reflexivity and protection from unwarranted bias

Framing

- Is it clear what is already known, and what this study builds on?

    - Prior evidence & theory?

    - Clear purpose?

        - Describe something that has not been described before
        - Produce a new way of thinking about something
        - Generate theory
        - Test theory
        - …

Trustworthiness of procedure

- Are the size & nature of the sample justified?

- Are the right data obtained for the research question?

Trustworthiness of analysis & findings

- Is the analysis realistic?

  - 'Used grounded theory' ✘
  - 'Used techniques associated with grounded theory' ✔

- Are the findings coherent?

  - Organised (temporal / theoretical / taxonomic)?
  - Categories defined & mutually exclusive?

- Do the findings show validity?

  - Theoretical validity (develops theory)?
  - Catalytic validity (potential to change participants)?

Transferability

- What can be transferred?
  - New concepts?
  - Theory?
  - Hypotheses?

- Who is it for?
  - Academic community?
  - Practitioners?

Trustworthiness of the researcher ('permeability')

- Is the researcher open to being changed by the research?

- Does the researcher rigorously test the analysis?