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# 18. Publishing qualitative research

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Merton and Kendall (1946) wrote that "social scientists have come to abandon the spurious choice between qualitative and quantitative data; they are concerned rather with that combination of both which makes use of the most valuable features of each" (pp. 556–557). Qualitative studies can be just as rigorous as quantitative studies (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016). We note that in industrial/organizational (I-O) psychology and the allied discipline of occupational health psychology (OHP), quantitative research predominates. However, a false dichotomy has been created that suggests that investigators have to classify themselves as either "quantitative" or "qualitative" researchers (Walsh, 2012). We consider ourselves both. The goal of this chapter is to help I-O and OH psychologists publish qualitative research, with the help of advice from two researchers who have been successful in publishing such research, while also having at times experienced setbacks in the publication process. Much of the research mentioned here will fall within the framework of OHP (a subdiscipline typically concerned with understanding workplace stress, promoting worker health and safety, and investigating work-family [im]balance, to name a few), as it is our main expertise, but the overall field of I-O will often be discussed as well.

## WHAT IS QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

We briefly define qualitative research and several specific approaches to it. Qualitative research has roots in anthropology and sociology, particularly ethnography (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is a means for studying and developing an understanding of individuals' social reality. Qualitative research methods can help researchers obtain insight into the social reality of the workplace (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Qualitative research can uniquely contribute to I-O psychology and OHP in several ways. First, the themes or categories (we use these terms interchangeably) that emerge from qualitative data can help shape theory construction and

hypothesis generation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Second, qualitative research plays a role in the discovery of phenomena heretofore undiscovered or underappreciated (see Schonfeld & Farrell, 2010) and can add nuance to existing theory (Mazzola et al., 2011b). Third, qualitative research can help investigators understand difficult-to-interpret findings, including why some interventions that seem promising on paper fail (Bussing & Glaser, 1999). Fourth, what qualitative researchers learn from workers can be the source of items for scale creation (Schonfeld & Feinman, 2012). We recommend Schonfeld and Mazzola (2013) for a more thorough explanation of these uses for qualitative research, and its accompanying challenges—although many of those will be enumerated here too.

Thus, qualitative research is important because it can accomplish all of the above research objectives, often in ways that quantitative research cannot, or, better yet, in ways that complement quantitative research. Qualitative research often provides deep context and meaning to the numbers researchers often take for granted, while investigating new areas and driving future research questions (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2013). For example, in the qualitative research of Kossek and colleagues (2021), important themes emerged regarding how women in STEM fields adapted to disrupted work–nonwork boundaries during the COVID pandemic. Understanding what has been happening to the women in this population is an important goal for qualitative research, especially given the paucity of prior research. Moreover, a case can be made for broader generalizability and planning for future studies in several related areas and populations. Further, qualitative research has the strength of not assuming a priori that we know all the right questions to ask (Mazzola et al., 2011b). It is often important, if not overlooked, that we should first be asking what phenomena and factors in the workplace are important to workers, but from the workers' perspectives, before asking workers questions in a more direct, quantitatively-oriented study. The workers' perspectives can inform the items to be constructed and built into the scales to be used in quantitatively-oriented research.

You will notice that, among a plethora of other interesting qualitative studies cited here, both authors are cited liberally in this paper. That is not simply because we know our papers best and enjoy what they have to say (Note: we really do though). It is because we have published within the qualitative space (included several times in collaboration), which we think positions us well to help readers succeed in publishing their own qualitative research. We hope this chapter will help readers learn from our successes (and from our failures!) and succeed in publishing well-crafted and interesting qualitative studies. Moreover, we look forward to reading them when you do!

## TYPES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative researchers rely on several different types of research methods that differ in their time/effort commitment and intrusiveness, both for the researcher and the participant. Our purpose here is to briefly introduce the methods for uninitiated readers and frame those methods in the context of publishing your own qualitative research. A deep dive into the methodology, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a more complete description, and a discussion of the methodology's strengths and weaknesses, we direct you to Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation,* one of many excellent resources readers can utilize.

One general type of study method involves posing questions, online, on paper, or orally, to workers and letting them respond freely. The least intrusive and easiest method to employ is the open-ended questionnaire, although it has the limitation of not permitting follow-up questions. In this method, questions are asked that provide participants a chance to elaborate on their experiences, in contrast to methods that ask questions that have a finite number of responses (e.g., Likert scales). Examples of the abovementioned open-ended questions include "What do you like most about your job?" or "Tell us about a recent work-related stressful event you experienced" (Keenan & Newton, 1985). Responses to the questions can then be coded into categories for easier interpretation (more on this later) or presented as simple narratives. Schonfeld and Santiago (1994) asked teachers to write in an open-ended way whatever they wanted to report about their jobs. Of course, it was left to the researchers to make sense of what the teachers wrote. Coding qualitative responses and counting the number of responses categorized within each code will have a "quantitative feel" because the method adds a quantitative element to the results. However, at least one author of this chapter can attest to situations where such studies were considered "too qualitative" for typical I-O journals and "too quantitative" for the few strictly qualitative journals out there!

While the abovementioned method has the limitation of precluding the asking of follow-up questions to clarify or probe workers' experiences, another commonly used method addresses that concern, namely, the semi-structured interview. These interviews give the qualitative researcher a few carefully written specific questions, as well as nondirective questions, that provide respondents latitude in describing their work while maintaining rigor through the structure and script. The interviewer can respond to the interviewee's answers by asking both scripted and/or unscripted follow-up questions to better understand the social reality of the worker, provided objectivity and consistency are maintained as much as possible. Bussing and Glaser (1999) conducted a qualitative interview study, as a complement to a quantitative investigation, for the

purpose of understanding the nature of the benefits and, no less, the burdens of a well-intentioned intervention designed to give nurses fewer patients and greater autonomy over the care of those patients. That study is also an example of mixed methodology (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011), which allows for balancing the general strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches and can often yield insights that can convince reviewers of the quality of the research.

A third type of qualitative study involves focus groups, which are essentially group interviews. A qualitative investigator may ask a group of workers about the stressful conditions they encounter at their jobs. An advantage of focus groups is that one group member's answer may stimulate another group member to think more deeply about conditions at his or her job. And the thoughts of that second group member may, in turn, stimulate the first group member or other group members to recall more. Holmes and MacInnes (2003) in a focus-group study identified key stressors that adversely affected prison staff. A qualitative researcher, however, needs to be mindful of the possibility that the presence of several interviewees in a focus group could inhibit a respondent from speaking freely (e.g., over concerns about embarrassing revelations).

The least utilized type of qualitative study in I-O and OHP research involves first-hand observation of workers. For example, the researcher carefully observes workers and records what they are doing. Kainan (1994) placed herself in a staff room and listened to and took detailed notes on teachers' conversations. Another type of first-hand observation requires the researcher to train for and perform the type of job he or she wants to study, and then record observations "from the inside." Palmer (1983) trained as an emergency medical technician and rode along on calls with other EMTs and paramedics; he also informally interviewed them.

Investigators must get permission from the appropriate human subjects committee (e.g., a university's Institutional Review Board) and from the study participants in order to launch a qualitative study. Given the wide range of jobs I-O and OH psychologists study, and the paucity of observational research, the potential list of unaddressed research questions is long and the new contributions to the literature are virtually limitless.

Although not a direct study of individuals, there is an approach to qualitative research imperfectly analogous to a meta-analysis (sometimes called a "qualitative meta-analysis" or "meta-synthesis"; see Timulak & Creaner [2023]). Mazzola et al. (2011b) and Schonfeld and Farrell (2010) examined qualitative studies on occupational stress. The studies they examined covered a wide cross-section of occupations. The authors' goal was to identify patterns in (a) occupational stressors affecting workers, (b) the stressors' impact, and (c) the ways workers cope with those stressors.

Qualitative studies contrast sharply with more traditional types of research, such as experiments, quasi-experiments, and traditional survey research. The latter studies are typically quantitatively organized with numerical outcomes, such as scores on a depressive symptom scale or a job satisfaction measure. Compared to qualitative studies, quantitatively-organized studies typically have many more participants. The lingua franca of quantitatively organized studies is—no surprise—numbers. Most studies that get published in I-O and OHP journals are quantitative in nature. However, as should already be clear, different types of research (different types of studies, whether quantitative or qualitative) have the potential to overcome the limitations of the other methodology, which ultimately gives any study a better chance at making new contributions and providing greater understanding of social phenomena. Understanding phenomena is a goal of science. It is therefore up to all of us who use qualitative or mixed methods to conduct high-quality studies and find ways to convince editors and reviewers that such research is consistent with that goal.

## THE REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLISHING HIGH-QUALITY QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Forgive the play on the words in the section's title, but we want to underline the idea that although qualitative research, unlike the preponderance of research in psychology and other scientific disciplines, is relatively nonnumerical, qualitative research and more quantitatively organized research share several common requirements that bear on publishability.[1] We enumerate a few of the requirements for publishing high-value qualitative research in I-O and OHP journals (although not all of them need to be met in one study).

First, to achieve the goal of publishing a qualitative paper, we mention a practical consideration before we address some of the research-oriented requirements. Editors of research journals and book chapters want good, clear writing. Whether a submission describes a qualitative study or a study that includes structural equation modeling, the writing must be clear, concise, and readable. When considering readers, we stress that the readership is likely to be wider than the target audience. If an author is writing about job stress in nurses, the author's target audience is likely to be nurses and those who conduct research on stress in the nursing profession. But professionals in other

[1] We would like to take a moment to acknowledge that the word "publishability" was lit up by our Word spell checker (although it is in the *OED*). We choose to ignore our spell checker because (a) we believe it is an appropriate word to use here and (b) its use will make the rest of this paper less wordy and thus clear and concise in a way the following paragraph suggests.

fields should find the writing readable. Such professionals would include science-literate journalists, investigators who conduct research on job stress affecting other types of workers, policymakers, and healthcare administrators who are concerned about why nurses and other healthcare professionals are dissatisfied with their jobs and/or are likely to quit. Conciseness can be particularly tough for qualitative papers as they are often largely narrative; it is, therefore, important to select your words carefully (e.g., the choice may be made to write a short introduction to leave ample room for expanding on findings and providing participant quotes). Good writing and clarity are requirements of papers using any methodology. If the writing in a submission is weak and unclear, reviewers and editors will not accept the submission. This might be particularly important to consider early in the process, especially if the intended journal has a word limit.

Second, like investigators who publish quantitatively-oriented research, qualitative researchers are concerned with discovery (Schonfeld & Farrell, 2010). For example, Vahtera et al. (2004), in a quantitatively-organized prospective cohort study, found that downsizing led to increased risk of premature cardiovascular deaths among workers who *kept* their jobs. The qualitative researcher's intensive focus on individuals may also discover phenomena that are otherwise difficult to ascertain from the quantitative results. Bussing and Glaser (1999), for example, found that an intervention designed to give nurses greater autonomy over fewer patients, an intervention that on paper looked as if it would boost morale, gave rise to unanticipated problems. Compared to nurses in a Taylorist[2] ward control condition, the nurses in the intervention condition experienced *higher*, not the expected lower, levels of emotional exhaustion. The qualitative findings revealed that the intervention led to an intensification of the nurses' emotional work and interactional stress.

Third, both qualitative research and quantitatively-organized research are concerned with theory development. Generating and presenting theory is helpful in getting published. For example, a cornerstone of social theory dating back to Durkheim's (1912/1951) pioneering quantitative research on suicide is the central place of social ties. A correlative theoretical idea that developed out of the concern for social ties is that of the varieties of social support (e.g., emotional support, tangible support). While playing a prominent role in quantitatively-organized research dating from the 1970s (e.g., Berkman & Syme, 1979), qualitative research has complemented quantitative research in terms of extending the idea of the importance of social ties and the supportiveness of those ties to coworkers and managers (e.g., Mazzola et al., 2011b; Schonfeld

[2] By Taylorist ward conditions we refer to wards that have a more structured, "assembly line"–like designs.

& Santiago, 1994). Self-employed individuals in solo enterprises are presumably more isolated from other workers. Even self-employed individuals who have encountered challenging work-related stressors report having benefited from supportive social ties (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015). The central place of social ties in human life implies that interpersonal conflict at work is highly stressful (Mazzola et al., 2011b; Schonfeld & Farrell, 2010) and contributes to the development of health problems (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). A precipitate out of theory development is hypothesis generation. But bear in mind that while qualitative research is useful in terms of hypothesis generation, it is not equipped for hypothesis testing. Quantitatively organized studies are ordinarily better suited for hypothesis testing.

Fourth, high-quality qualitative research can serve as a precursor to future, quantitatively-oriented studies and/or interventions, which is one way to help a qualitatively-oriented research paper along to publication. Mazzola et al. (2017) used qualitative methods to determine the types and frequencies of workplace barriers and facilitators to healthy nutrition and exercise behaviors. A future study then incorporated those findings to create checklists that would further examine the relationships between these factors and important work outcomes (Jackson et al., 2022). Bardoel (2016) examined work-related problems in multinational enterprises. Their qualitative interviews revealed the kinds of tensions experienced by managers (e.g., tensions pertaining to the degree to which managerial decision-making is centralized or decentralized). The discovery of specific tensions can help researchers and practitioners develop interventions to alleviate problems facing managers.

Fifth, whether a qualitative paper or a quantitatively-oriented paper, the study should add to our fund of knowledge. In preparing a research paper for submission, make clear how the submission's findings add to the literature. Both authors of this chapter have been reviewers for high-impact academic journals and one of us is currently an editor for such a journal. A common type of reviewer comment on submissions that get rejected goes something like "I do not see how this study contributes to our knowledge." Paul and Moser (2009), in their comprehensive quantitatively organized meta-analysis of the impact of unemployment on mental health, estimated the average effect size of the psychological impact of involuntary job loss. Paul and Moser's study cuts a Gordian knot in the literature. The authors evaluated the hypothesis that a trajectory that (a) includes gainful employment, (b) followed by involuntary job loss, and (c) followed by re-employment constitutes, in some sense, a "growth" experience. Paul and Moser showed that the hypothesis is plainly wrong. In a qualitative study, Giuntoli et al. (2015) linked job loss to the disruption of work role-based identities and statuses, which have implications for self-esteem. The social meaning of involuntary job loss is also associated with stigma and the unemployed worker's reduced sense of agency. Both studies contribute to our

knowledge of the impact of involuntary job loss, as well as hypotheses bearing on the nature of the mental-health impact of involuntary job loss. Both studies add to the research literature but do so in different, yet valuable, ways. If the aim is to publish a qualitative study, the writer should make clear to editors and reviewers how the research adds to the literature.

Sixth, in making qualitative research more compelling, that is to say, more publishable, qualitative investigators should bear in mind an idea articulated by the literary theorist Kenneth Burke (1935), namely, that "a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing—a focus upon object A involves a neglect of object B" (p. 49). Schonfeld and Mazzola (2015) set out to identify chronic and acute job-related stressors affecting self-employed individuals, the stressors' psychological impact, and the ways the stressors were coped with individually and with the help of others. What the investigators wanted to avoid "not seeing" was what self-employed individuals liked or loved about their jobs. As most OHP research tends to focus on the negative aspects of work, the authors wanted to avoid their failing to observe the positives. The authors, therefore, built into their qualitative study means for ascertaining what the respondents liked or loved about their jobs, giving the research more breadth and making it more appealing to reviewers and, more generally, readers. A particularly salient ingredient in a qualitative design involves being able to learn about and present as deeply as possible the "human element" behind work experiences.

Finally, the qualitative study must reflect best practices. While best practices can vary from study to study (and across disciplines and research questions), a few papers have attempted to give qualitative researchers some general guidelines to help them get started. Cassell and Symon (2011) provided a list of what a "good" qualitative study should be. While qualitative research is rarer than quantitative research, not all qualitative research is created equal. As we have reviewed many qualitative research papers over the years, we can report that some investigators submit qualitative research that is overly subjective and haphazard. Reviewers will reject those submissions. It is important to underline the study's objectivity in the methods section while also creating a design that answers the research questions and avoids limitations as much as possible. Following the best-practices guidelines in the provided citations (and those you find on your own) is a good place to start for meeting those standards to enhance publishability. Another important part of the best practices is that a high-quality qualitative study should be based on one or more focused and well-worded research questions (Agee, 2009). Like any other paper, it is up to the authors to convey to the audience the question intended to be answered, match the data collection and analysis to that question, and concisely explain the data-driven answers to that question. This should greatly enhance the study's publishability.

## THOUGHTS ON ANALYZING QUALITATIVE DATA AND PUBLISHABILTY

Earlier we alluded to the making sense of qualitative data. The sine qua non of sense-making in qualitative research is content analysis. Much has been written about content analysis (e.g., Krippendorff, 2018), and we will not go into detail here. Our advice is this: although a small number of qualitative researchers publish single-author papers, we believe that teamwork enhances content analyses. Most quantitative research involves coordinated teamwork, and we believe that it is helpful to have at least two authors who trust each other's judgment to conduct content analyses. They should feel free enough to disagree even if one author is more senior than the other. Each author can check the other author's efforts. One way to perform a content analysis is for each author to review the transcripts of, say, 15 respondent interviews and *independently* content-analyze the texts for potential themes. Then, the authors can check if they identified the same categories, allowing that they may use different words, but the words reflect the same meaning and not genuine interpretative disagreements. Of course, the authors may have genuine disagreements but that can be productively worked out in frank discussions. During a discussion one collaborator may realize that the other identified a theme the former missed (or identified a theme that is specious). In the discussion, the collaborators work out their coding scheme.

We recommend that the categories the investigators create have strict lines of demarcation that are clear to all coders before moving to the coding phase. In the next step, at least two coders *independently* review all remaining responses to each question according to the coding scheme. Once categories have emerged, their frequencies should be tabulated. At least one of us can attest to a project involving three researchers who coded over 600 responses to two questions, then realized that two categories overlapped more than initially thought, making the level of interrater agreement too low. After redefining the categories' demarcation lines more clearly, the coding of responses had to be conducted again, from the beginning. As another example, the coders of stressful events observed that both work overload and time constraints (both common stressors in the literature [Mazzola et al., 2011b]) came up frequently. We decided in the content analysis phase that anything specifically mentioning a time component would be coded as the latter, and all responses involving too much work were coded as the former (Mazzola et al., 2011a). Distinctions between categories are important and can often be difficult for a coder to initially identify, which is another reason to employ multiple coders.

Teamwork and interrater agreement go hand and hand in producing a publishable paper that effectively describes the social reality of workers. After

the raters' experience working on and discussing the categories emerging from the responses to the items in an initial batch, it is important to establish the reliability of researchers' judgments regarding the categories that emerge from the remaining raw data. We (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015) employed the coefficient kappa, a measure of interrater reliability that corrects for chance agreement (Cohen, 1960; Fleiss et al., 2003) to understand and document the extent to which we agreed when independently coding the categories that emerged from our research interviews of self-employed workers. Schonfeld and Santiago (1994) applied a similar procedure to ensure the reliability of the themes that emerged from teachers' open-ended writings about their work. Statistical software needed to apply kappa is readily available (e.g., SPSS). Too often qualitative researchers neglect the task of establishing the reliability of categories that emerge from qualitative data (Schonfeld & Farrell, 2010). By contrast, quantitative researchers *always* evaluate the reliability of the measures they use. Reviewers will have more confidence in qualitative research papers that are undergirded by reliable findings.

Some qualitative papers do little beyond a discussion of general themes and provide interesting narratives based on participant responses. If this approach can answer the authors' research questions and contribute to the literature, then it may be enough to make the paper publishable. However, providing frequency counts enhances the contribution of the paper and its publishability. It is one thing to report "these are the stressful events that engineers encounter," but it is quite another thing to report "these are the most common stressors" in a sample. Keenan and Newton (1985) found that time-wasting and work underload were common stressors among young professional engineers, stressors that had previously gone unrecognized. Given this heretofore unexplored area of research on job stress, the study's contribution to the literature had to have made a positive impression on reviewers (because the study was indeed published). Furthermore, the footprint that the study left became part of a "meta-synthesis" in which comparisons among studies were made to better understand variation in the common stressors affecting members of different occupational and national groups (Mazzola et al., 2011b). A certain amount of "quantification" can be helpful in some (but not all) qualitative research (Pratt, 2008), even if the quantification amounts to simply tabulating the frequencies of the types of stressors and strains (e.g., job dissatisfaction, anxiety) that affected participants. In another example of quantification, Schonfeld and Feinman (2012) conducted a qualitative, critical incident interview study involving 74 teachers for the purpose of identifying the stressors teachers most commonly encounter on the job. Using that qualitative data, the investigators created a teacher daily diary to tabulate stressor frequencies in another 252 teachers, with each teacher followed over a span of two weeks.

Having a good deal of experience reviewing papers by authors who use qualitative and mixed methods, we note that there is great variability in the skills of the submitters. It is common to read manuscripts describing studies that ask questions not suited for qualitative inquiry, lack sufficient analysis or synthesis of the raw data, or involve an alarming lack of objectivity. Some submitted papers say nothing more about an analysis than, in effect, "one author looked at the responses for themes." Such submissions detract from the reputation of qualitative research and thereby hurt future qualitative researchers' chances of publication. That said, there are also excellent studies that use qualitative and mixed methods that add to fields of inquiry. The onus on qualitative researchers is to present a thorough description of their methodology, including questions asked, method used, coding procedures, decisions, and how objectivity was maintained. This not only improves the quality and interpretation of the results, but also enhances the chances of a study getting published.

We underlined the idea of objectivity, which may, on the surface, seem odd because in qualitative research we often probe workers' thoughts and feelings. We note that by objectivity we do not mean a kind of photographic image of a workplace. We recognize that each worker in the same organization may have a reality that differs from that of another worker. However, it is also likely that there are commonalities in the social reality of those workers, and we want our qualitative methods to capture that shared social reality through systematic interpretation of those responses.

In arriving at categories emerging from the content of transcripts of participant narratives, we note that software applications (e.g., NVivo, ATLAS.ti) are available to help researchers (Mazzola & Schonfeld, 2017). We, however, have preferred to conduct our content analyses the old-fashioned way, namely, by immersing ourselves, as far as possible, in the research participants' narratives about their lived experiences. We closely read transcripts of those narratives (and we have read some very compelling narratives) and let higher-order categories emerge directly from our reading. This is a personal/professional choice. In our view, the choice is best left to the individual qualitative researcher. We are, however, cognizant of recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP). One of us has played with the AI software ChatGPT in categorizing transcripts of data we already collected *and* published. We think the application of AI to interpreting and categorizing qualitative data is a field that merits study. There is potential for a study that compares the higher-order categories that emerge when (a) humans read and mentally process transcripts of qualitative data and (b) AI processes the same transcripts. Perhaps the results will be mutually supporting. Perhaps there will be contradictions. In our view, there is a research opportunity we believe cries out for publications.

We briefly noted some thoughts on productively analyzing qualitative data. First, given the need for content analyses, we endorse the idea that the qualitative research is best conducted by a team of at least two researchers. Given the need to establish the reliability of team members' judgments, we have used the coefficient kappa to establish the reliability of the categories to emerge from the team members' reading of qualitative data. Next, we noted that a certain amount of "quantification" could help a study get published even if the quantification amounts to just tabulating frequency counts of things like categories of stressors, strains, and coping mechanisms. We also underlined the importance of thoroughly describing a research methodology, which gives a reviewer confidence that the social reality to emerge from the data is objective. Finally, we think that there will be opportunities for qualitative research that capitalizes on AI and advances in NLP. We also suggest that there are opportunities for research that compares human and AI-based coding of qualitative data.

## WHAT NOT TO DO

Qualitative methods have limitations. If a reader of this chapter plans to publish a qualitative study, please bear in mind what a qualitative study cannot do. Because qualitative studies almost always involve small, select samples that are unrepresentative of a larger population, they are unlikely to yield findings that generalize to the wider population. Most quantitatively-organized studies have larger samples; however, the samples are generally *not* representative of the larger population either.

Qualitative studies are not equipped to demonstrate the causal impact of one factor on another. We have often seen qualitative papers under review say something along the lines of "job insecurity clearly led to physical symptoms for participants." While this statement is likely true based on other research (Nixon et al., 2011), and possibly even for these individuals, such a causal conclusion cannot be drawn from simply looking at narratives from one (or even multiple) respondents discussing what they find stressful in their job. Qualitative research on workplace interventions cannot demonstrate a cause–effect relation between an intervention and an outcome like anxiety or job satisfaction (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2013). A qualitative study is not equivalent to a randomized controlled trial. Workplace interventions tend to have many component elements. Qualitative research may help us understand the components of an intervention that are most salient and most (and least) appreciated by workers. Such research can also shed light on why a workplace intervention reduces job stress or, as in the case of Bussing and Glaser's (1999) study, why an intervention exerted unanticipated adverse effects. Qualitative research attached to a workplace intervention should query workers in such a way as to obtain a degree of specificity regarding their thoughts about the components

of an intervention; however, the investigator needs to avoid asking leading or biasing questions (Merton & Kendall, 1946). As mentioned previously, the qualitative researcher has a mandate to maintain objectivity throughout the inquiry (and report on how it is maintained), as such methods can more easily lead to bias in comparison to quantitative methods (which themselves are not immune to bias [Lash et al., 2014]).

As an example of the above admonition, a qualitative researcher or anyone else would probably intuit that involuntary job loss, on average, gives rise to depressive symptoms in newly unemployed workers. As intuitive as such a proposition is, qualitative studies cannot provide cause–effect evidence for that proposition. Given the canons of science, qualitative methods are not organized in such a way as to provide firm cause–effect evidence. It would be fruitless to try to publish a qualitative study the aim of which is to provide evidence for the causal impact of one factor on another. Since, ethically, investigators cannot conduct experiments in which workers are randomly allocated to involuntary job loss and job retention, the sturdiest way to evaluate the impact of involuntary job loss on mental health is by way of a prospective cohort study (Schonfeld & Chang, 2017). But what can qualitative researchers do? Qualitative researchers *can*, for example, study the meanings workers attach to involuntary job loss. Those meanings can help us elaborate a theory and a set of hypotheses regarding the pathways by which involuntary job loss affects mental health (Giuntoli et al., 2015).

## SUMMARIZING OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLISHING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

We conclude this chapter with a summary of our recommendations regarding publishing qualitative I-O and OHP research. First, and perhaps foremost, the authors should write clearly. If what the authors have written is unclear or chock-a-block full of bad writing, count on the paper being rejected. Second, qualitative research is concerned with discovery (Schonfeld & Farrell, 2010). If a research team collects qualitative data from which a new idea emerges or adds nuance to an idea that another team developed, such a paper would have a better chance of publication. Third, theory development or elaboration is important in social science. Qualitative research that helps in theory development and hypothesis generation can be worthy of publication.

Fourth, some qualitative research can be framed as a precursor to quantitatively-oriented research. Fifth, qualitative research should add to our fund of knowledge that can be later tested in a larger quantitative study. Sixth, investigators conducting qualitative research should consider what their research plans do not address. If, on reflection, they find that their plans neglected

something of value, the researchers should consider expanding the scope of their study, within reason given their resources.

Seventh, we underlined the importance of employing best practices (e.g., teamwork, reliability testing). We also advocate that investigators contemplate the limitations of qualitative research and avoid making claims that qualitative methods cannot support (e.g., cause–effect claims). Represent your study's weaknesses and limitations as you would in any research study.

Consider the idea, when the research question calls for it, of combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the context of a single study, with the strengths of one type of methodology balancing the weaknesses of the other. For example, in a study of graduate students, Mazzola et al. (2011a) found that personally salient stressful events (assessed qualitatively and unconstrained by procrustean scale items) were related to elevated levels of physical symptoms (measured quantitatively). Note that there are journals devoted to research conducted in which mixed methods are utilized (e.g., the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*).

The reader may also consider adding a qualitative component to a quantitatively-organized survey. We are not referring to a mixed-methods study as described above. We, instead, suggest running two separate studies within a single effort to put research in the field: a quantitatively oriented study such as a survey, and a separate qualitative study that builds upon the experiences of all or a subset of the study participants. Schonfeld and Santiago (1994) collected qualitative data in a component that was added on to a quantitatively-organized longitudinal study. One of the superordinate categories to emerge from the qualitative data was the depth of the reality of public-school teachers' experience of violence and its threat (this was before events like the Columbine High School shootings). An add-on qualitative study should shed light on an important concern; however, the add-on could constitute a separate publishable study.

Finally, we alert readers that it is sometimes difficult to get qualitative and mixed-methods articles published (Pratt & Bonaccio, 2016). Submitters of a qualitative study may get responses ranging from "not quantitative enough," "not qualitative enough," and "we simply don't accept qualitative work." Academia is a publish-or-perish world, especially early in a career. A consequence is that novice academicians will lean toward conducting research that maximizes the chances of publication, which is important for promotion and tenure. Difficulties associated with publishing qualitative research would, therefore, likely motivate some researchers to avoid such research in favor of quantitative studies, which would be slightly less difficult to publish. To show that your qualitative research is different, describe how it makes a contribution and is a valuable addition to the field.

To get ahead given the above-described journal landscape, look for journals that value qualitative research. These include actual qualitative journals, such as *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, as well as more general journals that respect qualitative studies, such as the *Academy of Management Journal* and the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology.* One method we use when deciding where to submit is to open an academic database (e.g., PsycInfo), enter both the journal's name and "qualitative" as search terms. In that way, we ascertain how many qualitative papers were published (how many "hits"), paying particular attention to recent years. If the number is zero, then a submission is likely to be rejected. The editors of journals that yield hits understand the value of well-done qualitative research. We encourage researchers to conduct qualitative research that follows the guidelines described here. Of course, the research should match your passion *and* contribute to the literature. If you are able to do that, we believe your paper will have a greater chance at publication!

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