



Publishing Qualitative Research

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A summary reference is:

Cuervo-Cazurra, Andersson, Brannen, Nielsen & Reuber,

Can I Trust Your Findings: Part A, *JIBS*, 2016



1. Explain and justify why you're using qualitative methods

What is theory?

Theory is a statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon occurs (Corley & Gioia, *AMR* 2011)

- There are relationships between constructs to specify
- There is an outcome to explain
- There is an explanation (not just a set of explanatory factors) – mechanism is laid out



Can tie use of qualitative methods to the state of prior theory and research

State of Prior Theory and Research

	Nascent	Mature
Research questions	More open-ended; more oriented around a phenomenon (inductive)	More focused; more oriented around existing constructs (deductive)
Type of data	Qualitative	Quantitative
Constructs and measures	New ones are generated	Relies on existing constructs & measures
Goal of data analysis	Pattern identification	Hypothesis testing
Data analysis methods	Thematic coding	Statistical inference
Research objectives	Generate new theory (processes, constructs, relationships)	Test theory; add new mechanisms or boundaries to existing theory



2. Need to ground your research question(s) and findings in a scholarly conversation

- “Generating” theory doesn’t mean ignoring prior research
- It can be challenging to find the right trade-off between recognizing and drawing on previous theory and distancing yourself from it
 - You can describe existing theory and highlight where it is largely silent to make room for your contribution (Pratt, *ORM* 2008)

3. Stick to a strong consistent storyline throughout

Explain and justify the outcome you're explaining

- Based on nascent prior literature
- Process or variance theory being developed
- Level of analysis (e.g. individual, firm, network...)
- Probably not suitable for studying propensities performance and generalizations

Explain and justify the context you're studying

- Bounds the theoretical claims you can make (generalizability)
- Could be type of firm (small or mature or high tech), situational (emerging economy or pre-Brexit or failed acquisition)

Explain and justify the site/sample you've chosen

- Single case – Why this one?
- Multiple cases – What diversity are you seeking? What commonalities?



4. Be flexible about what papers you will generate and don't get locked in to using parts of your data set for different papers. Your framing and research question(s) are likely to change.
5. Be rigorous in detailing and justifying your research methods choices
 - Reference respected and appropriate authorities
 - Don't throw jargon at the reviewers
 - How do you achieve data replication and data triangulation?
 - Describe the theoretical enabling lens you are using to analyze the data
 - Describe the analysis process and show examples of work products (e.g. time lines, coding schemes)
6. Define key constructs from prior literature and in your findings



7. Provide strong evidence for your claims

- Balance between showing and telling (Pratt, *AMJ* 2009)
- Showing data that is straightforward for the reader to interpret
- Allow for “negative cases” – explaining instances in your data that don’t fit the dominant pattern can add increase perceptions of the rigor of your analysis
- Evidence should cover constructs and relationships between them to explain the outcomes



8. Plan how you'll go from the descriptive (concrete) to the theoretical (abstract)
 - Theory is a statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon occurs
 - Your contribution is how you have changed our collective understanding of this phenomenon (not what you did)
 - Creative uses of exhibits can help



9. Imitate templates and examples

(only reinvent the wheel as much as you have to)

- There are templates for some types of qualitative research (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, *ORM*, 2012; Langley & Abdallah, *Research Methodology in Strategy & Management*, 2011)
- Find papers in top tier journals doing what you're trying to do (e.g. develop a process model with a single case) and copy their structure and methods-related content