

The Qualitative Report

TQR Ready Review Comments and Compliments

Revised March 30, 2011; August 18, 2012; September 28, 2014; January 20, 2016, February 6, 2016; January 28, 2017; April 29, 2017; August 11, 2018; October 30, 2018; February 1, 2019; March 30, 2019; April 6, 2019; June 1, 2019

The Qualitative Report Editors

Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida USA

As an editorial board, we are committed to helping authors improve their qualitative research reporting and to publishing articles that reflect the best quality in qualitative research. We acknowledge that there is great variety in qualitative research and the reporting of results from these inquiries, and our position on what constitutes quality in these areas has evolved over the years as we have learned from the practice of reading and reviewing the papers submitted to the journal, as well as from our review of articles published in other journals and prescriptions for quality in qualitative research shared through published articles, books, and book chapters. In reviewing papers for potential publication in *The Qualitative Report (TQR)*, we encourage authors to report the findings of their qualitative research studies using what we as editors have selected as “best practices” in contemporary qualitative research practice and presentation.

As members of the *TQR* Editorial Board, we communicate our preferences for qualitative research practice and reporting in our reviews and at the same time engage in dialogue with our authors regarding ways in which their style of conducting and reporting qualitative research may contrast with our perspectives. The resulting published article is then a result of this collaborative conversation reflecting both our vision and values and those of our authors. Throughout this editorial process we adhere to the basic tenets of transparency and openness as we communicate our preferences, the contexts from which they have emerged, and our understandings of the author’s positions on these same points. In this process we attempt to maintain a respectful, supportive, yet firm posture. *(Please see some additional information on the tone of comments and the relationship between reviewer and author at the end of this document.)*

To help you as a reviewer for *TQR*, we have composed this guide to help you articulate the journal’s collective perspective on quality in qualitative research practice and reporting. We offer these comments in the spirit of helping you create an informative review. You are encouraged to incorporate relevant items into your commentary on the paper and to customize them to better address the particular issues you have identified in your author’s paper. We do ask that you not merely “cut and paste” our comments into your review without thoughtfully considering the context of those comments. (We would think that a review containing only comments that we offer in this guide would result in a choppy and incomplete review at best.)

We request that you insert the comments and compliments in Microsoft Word Comment balloons so authors can be directed to the specific, highlighted element of their paper you are addressing. We also ask that you reflect upon your interactions with the authors, identify areas in which flexibility is warranted to respect the integrity of a particular

author’s approach to qualitative research, and share insights you learn from these conversations so we can continue to evolve and produce high quality qualitative research reports.

General Opening Comments

We ask reviewers/editors to write a summarizing note at the beginning of each review—use authors names to address them, offer substantive compliments and then the things that we need added or changed. Remind them this is for the purpose of making their paper shine and be most useful to our international audience. The following are some comments you can use to start the report of your review to your author. They are intended to communicate our supportive editorial purpose and posture.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to review your paper! You will see many comments that are offered with the intention of helping to strengthen the presentation of your ideas. They are related to what we believe is necessary to include in the publication of qualitative inquiry.

.....
Thank you for submitting your paper to us! The comments below are offered in the spirit of helping you to make your paper even better.

.....
You will see many comments that are offered with the intention of helping to strengthen the presentation of your ideas. They are related to what we believe is necessary to include in the publication of qualitative inquiry.

.....
The Qualitative Report uses the MS Word Comment feature to embed comments in a reviewed manuscript. You will see many comments that are offered with the intention of helping to strengthen the presentation of your ideas. They are related to what we believe is necessary to include in the publication of qualitative inquiry.

.....
We use an open review process at TQR so please insert previously withheld identifying information.

.....
TQR is a Journal that focus on method. We ask our authors to be very detailed in the description of their method and present it in a way that others may benefit and repeat the steps. So most of the comments in your manuscript relate to a demand for more detailed description of your method.

Essential Elements

We developed a rubric at *TQR* to help us identify the elements we think are essential in a report of a qualitative research study (Cooper, 2011). In the appendix you will find this tool with each element and its sub-elements listed. Please use this tool as a guide when reviewing the manuscript so as to ensure the paper you are reviewing contains these important aspects of a quality qualitative report. To help you become more familiar with the *TQR* Rubric, please read over Cooper’s 2011 guide.

Coherence

Bringing these various elements of qualitative research papers into coherent textual patterns can present challenges for authors and editors alike. Although individual sections such as presentation of the problem, review of the literature, methodology, results, and discussion may each be constructed in a sound logical and structural sense, the alignment of these parts into a coherent mosaic may be lacking in many qualitative research manuscripts. Four editors of *The Qualitative Report* wrote a paper (Chenail, Duffy, St. George, & Wulff, 2011) in which they presented how they collaborate with authors to facilitate improvement papers' coherence in such areas as co-relating title, abstract, and the paper proper; coordinating the method presented with method employed; and calibrating the exuberance of implications with the essence of the findings. As a reviewer, reflect upon each section and how it seems or not seems to cohere with the other elements and draw upon the suggestions in the Chenail et al. 2011 paper to help you guide the authors to improve this aspect of their report.

The “In-Between” Paper

From time to time we receive a type of paper we have come to call the “in-between” paper which seems to be a report somewhere *in between* the report of the findings of a study and a paper about the study thought which the author tries to illustrate some point about the research conducted. In this type of paper, the focus always seems to shift between the two types of paper leaving us a reviewers confused as to just what the author is trying to accomplish. The following are ways in which we try to help authors address this apparent drift.

Please let me know how you would like to proceed and I will review the paper based upon the direction(s) you wish to take. Also, please let me know if you have any questions.

.....

Please let me share the concerns I have with your report. At *The Qualitative Report*, we find the focus and structure of papers such as yours presents unique challenges for us as editors and reviewers. On one hand, I see your paper is a pedagogical paper in which you present your example of inquiry based learning; and on the other hand, I note your paper is a report on the results of your students' inquiry into the Mumbai slums' water and sanitation problems. With such papers there is typically an issue with focus – a “How To” paper or a straight report of research findings. If the focus is not consistent, then the author gets confused as to just what type of paper is being presented. In other words, we find the focus of the paper shifts between a study of a method and study of the study in which the method was used. We don't think this is the best way to report a learning approach or the findings produced in a study employing an innovative pedagogical approach because the report ends up to be something in between the two types of reports. Having said that, we do like

both your teaching example and the study; it is just we have concerns with the way you have packaged both of them in one paper. In other words, if your paper was just a straight report of your study and its findings, then that would be okay; or if your paper was a critique report in which you offered suggestions on how to improve the inquiry based learning approach, then that would be okay too; but combining them both is a bit too much for one paper.

To remedy this concern, we ask that you either (a) revise the paper so it is a direct report on your research study, or (b) submit a briefer report in which discuss the methodological issues and explain different ways in which qualitative research can be used as a remedy. You could also submit two different papers if you wish.

Please let me know how you would like to proceed and I will review the paper based upon the direction(s) you wish to take. Also, please let me know if you have any questions.

Title Comments

Your paper title serves as the initial guide to the essence of your work so please revise your title so it includes the most important elements of your report. For example, who are your study participants, what is your focus in studying these participants, and what is your method for conducting this study? Instead of describing your method, you may wish to describe your findings.

.....
The sixth edition of its *Publication Manual*, American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) suggests titles be 12 words in length. Your current title is much longer than 12 words and contains repetitious elements, so please revise to eliminate redundancy and to bring your title closer to the 12 word APA length.

.....
This is a great title for the research proposal. Now that you have concluded the study, you may want to revise to indicate the essence of the phenomenon that you identified through your analysis—this is typical for research reports of phenomenological studies

Abstract and Key Words Comments

Please include an abstract using the APA guidelines for length and content.

.....
We ask authors to construct their abstracts in a concise manner that presents readers with an instructive map to the paper and we find this helps authors to organize their thoughts and to guide them as they revise the rest of their manuscript. In other words, your abstract should not be abstract! To this end, please compose your abstract in 200 words or less so it presents a logical and accurate reflection of the organizational structure of the paper. One way to do this is to organize your abstract into a five sentence essay: In sentence one you would present the problem or focus of your study or the gap you are planning to address; in sentence two you would present your study's research question or

hypothesis; in sentence three you would present your study's participants and methodology; in sentence four you would present your findings; and in sentence five you would present the main points from your discussion of the findings.

.....
Also, please include a list of key words that capture the main points of your paper. In reports of qualitative research results the list should at least include a term that describes your research method.

.....
Please add your research method to your list of key words.

Title, Abstract, and Keyword Compliments

Your paper title serves as an excellent initial guide to the essence of your work.

.....
In your abstract, you effectively capture the main points of your proposal.

.....
You effectively present the main points of your proposal with the keywords.

.....
In your title, abstract, and keywords, you effectively and consistently convey the important points of your paper.

.....
You did a good job in your abstract which presents the problem, participants, methodology, and results. My recommendation is to include the research question and some key points from discussion of the results.

Introduction, Theory, and Literature Review Section Comments

You need to convince the readers that your local study is of global importance. You can develop this rationale by formulating answers to questions such as the following: Does your study address a gap in the body of knowledge on this topic? Is the informational need of local stakeholders similar to others on a more global level? Are you addressing a significant problem, dilemma, or larger question with your study?

.....
This discussion then logically leads into: (a) a statement of rationale of need for the study, (b) naming of the intended audience, and (c) how the intended audience will benefit (I call this answering the "so what?" question).

.....
It is not clear to us how this theory fits within your research and that is important to explain to your reader. Every assertion and citation needs to be viewed as providing rationale for why your research question is crucial. What theories do you draw from that makes you want to ask parents about their experiences?

Please keep in mind that the purpose of literature review is to: (a) offer a synopsis of the current knowledge on your chosen topic in terms of content and research processes used, (b) to demonstrate what gap exists in our knowledge both in terms of content and research methods, and (c) to explain how your study is intended to fill that gap. This usually leads into the question(s) that drive the study and an explicit statement of the unique contribution that this study will provide in terms of literature and qualitative methods. Please add a section here at the end of the review in which you address these three points more clearly.

.....

In the review of the research literature please focus on establishing the gap in the research literature that contextualizes your study. This section feels like it came from your dissertation in which you were to demonstrate what you know about this topic. For a discovery-oriented qualitative research paper, you need to focus on what is not known more than what is known about this topic.

.....

Please remember this section is a literature “review” and not “view” so you need to show that the information presented here communicates your reflections of the collected understanding of the topic in question and not a series of reports from the individual sources you read. To this end, please make it clear what you learned from your reading of the literature and what we need to know in order to understand the context of your study.

.....

Your review of the literature typically includes two types of sources: (a) those materials which help you to define the phenomenon in question and (b) those research materials which help you to identify what is known and not known about the phenomenon in question. It is this last part of the review of the literature from which you establish the need and focus for your study.

.....

It would helpful to begin your literature review with an introduction statement (related to your research question), then consider giving your reader a map of your arguments. List the arguments you will review in order, then devote a section to each argument of your research question.

For Commentaries:

As this section transitions to your review of the literature, we suggest providing a listing of the argument and method topics, which are your subheadings. That will serve to guide your reader. Organize them in such a way as to construct your case for your commentary, moving from the issue to what you propose as an improvement on the current state of affairs.

In keeping with the TQR “brand,” which emphasizes transparency and openness, we ask authors to be transparent about their relationship to the studies they describe.

Before moving on to Methods we ask all authors to provide a brief discussion of their own context. This is based on a belief that who you are and how you are involved with the topic and study will influence the presentation. We want readers to have a fair understanding of the researcher to make the fullest evaluation of the study and to have greater confidence in what they are about to read. Toward that end, please tell us your relationship to this inquiry. Who are you? What is your interest in this topic? What is your investment in this project? What are your intentions?

Please add a self-of-the-researcher section so you tell us more about you as the researcher(s) and your connection to this study. How does this align with personal interests, professional work, etc., to help the reader place you directly in the center of your work?

Introduction and Literature Review Section Compliments

You have done a fine job articulating (a) the focus of your study and its importance; (b) the gap in the research literature and how your research question not only logically flows from this gap, but also clearly designed to produce results addressing said gap; and (c) your method and its appropriateness given your research question.

Method Section Comments

Please first explain why a qualitative approach was an appropriate choice for your method, then explain why autoethnography was an appropriate qualitative method, and then explain why the type of autoethnography you selected as most appropriate for your study.

.....

Transparency and openness are critical in reporting procedures and choices in qualitative research so please use active voice throughout the Method section so you make it clearer to your readers who did what in the study.

.....

Please provide a statement of third-party approval that you secured to conduct this study (e.g., Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects) or if your local context does not require such oversight, then please indicate this and describe how you ensured ethical research practice to protect participants' safety, privacy, and confidentiality. If the study was deemed to be exempted or excluded from IRB review, please make note of it.

.....

Please describe how you secured the participants' informed consent.

.....

We ask each of our authors to write their methods section in a stepwise fashion such that anyone else could use the same procedures/plan that you used. Therefore, I am suggesting that you reorganize this section to show your

progression through data gathering and analysis. I am suggesting an outline below and each section should have an associated heading:

1. Please identify what type of qualitative inquiry you used. Give your rationale for selecting a qualitative design in general and your particular qualitative design choice in particular and discuss how these choices are appropriate to answering the question under study.
2. Include a full discussion of how your participants were identified and recruited. For studies on materials such as previously existing recordings or records, discuss how these data sources were selected.
3. When discussing your study's participants please consider using composite descriptions rather than providing multiple identifying characteristics of each person. Such individuation can jeopardize the confidentiality of your participants and can detract from the composite orientation of your study (i.e., your research question pertained to a presenting a group perspective and not a listing of each individual's perspective).
4. Please explain every step of data generation and collection and provide a rationale for each of your research decisions (please cite the literature that you used as a guide). Make sure to tell us exactly what constitutes data in your study.
5. Clearly describe each step of your analysis of the data—include an example for illustration. You may present each step in terms of it from both a conceptual and operational perspective (please cite the literature that you used as a guide).
6. Include also a full discussion (including relevant literature) of every step you took to ensure rigor and trustworthiness.
7. Tell us how you are going to organize your results and how that is derived from your analysis.

.....
What quality control steps did you take to ensure the trustworthiness of your data? For example, did you keep a research notebook, maintain an audit trail, use constant comparison, etc.?
.....

In each part of your method section, please explain conceptually what methodological procedure you utilized and then describe operationally how you performed that step in your study. For each step, it is important you justify the decisions you made especially in relationship to these choices and what your research focus and questions are. As you communicate these interrelated aspects of your method, please cite the sources that guided your choices and actions. For example, if you used open coding, please explain what open coding is and why you incorporated its use in your study, describe how you open coded, and cite the source you used to understand and carry out this procedure.

Remember it's all about conceptualization, operationalization, justification, and documentation!

.....

Sometimes authors present tables in which they have given a great deal of personal information about each participant in the study. Even though the names have been changed, the provision of so much personal information (e.g., age, gender, occupation, marital status, etc.) juxtaposed with verbatim quotes, and the author's affiliation can be seen as a threat to the participants' confidentiality. The other matter is the study is primarily a report on the group's experience and not a series of individual reports. Given these concerns, here is a way you can address this concern:

Please consider not giving so much identifiable information about each individual participant. Such a practice can be seen as a threat to their confidentiality especially since you also provide verbatim quotes. In addition, your study is about what you learned across the group of participants and not necessarily an account of each participant's experience. Given these concerns, please consider presenting this information in the composite in one of your paragraphs.

Please share some sample interview questions.

Please describe how you processed your interviews (e.g., recorded, transcribed, etc.).

Please describe how you managed ethical concerns in your research (e.g., safety, confidentiality, privacy, etc.).

For Commentaries:

We ask our authors to describe their approach in a stepwise fashion such that anyone else could use the same procedures/plan that you used. Therefore, I am suggesting that you reorganize this section to show your progression through extant literature analysis and case building through your conclusions and perhaps advocated argument for a new perspective. I am suggesting an outline below and sections should have associated headings:

1. Please identify the extant literature of qualitative inquiry or issue upon which you are commenting. Clearly provide the organization of the case or argument you plan as your approach to synthesizing and analyzing the state of affairs. Give your rationale for your choice and discuss how it is appropriate to answering the study purpose.
2. Include a full discussion of how qualitative participants, data, findings, etc. are affected by the issue under study.

3. Please explain every step of your approach and provide a rationale for each of your research decisions. Make sure to tell us exactly what constitutes data.
4. Clearly describe each step of your analysis—include an example for illustration.
5. Include also a full discussion (including relevant literature) of every step you took to ensure rigor and trustworthiness.
6. Tell us how you are going to organize your resulting argument and how that is derived from your analysis.

.....

A suggested outline for organizing your commentary is:

1. What shortcomings in qualitative research need attention and overcoming in your view? Support all claims and assertions with quality literature.
2. Introduce your concept and metaphor.
3. Give us the context for the origination of this idea.
4. Make direct and concrete (and creative) links to qualitative inquiry. Ron likes to think of it as a lens, and through your lens you will tell how us the “thisness of [your lens] connects to the thatness of qualitative inquiry.”
5. Provide a discussion of the limitations within your thinking along with the practice and generativity of your idea.

Method Section Compliments

You clearly described (a) your methodological choices in the areas of Sample; Data Generation, Collection, Preparation and Data Analysis; and Quality Control (i.e., justification, conceptualization, operationalization, and documentation); (b) ethical issues and strategies to address these concerns; and (c) Reflect on the self-of-the-researcher and preparation in the context of your study.

Results Section Comments

Earlier in your paper you described your method as [Fill in the blank: grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, etc.] so when I came to your results section I expected to find [Fill in the blank: “a grounded theory,” “the essence of your participants’ experience,” “a rendering of the site’s culture”]. Instead, it seems you have produced findings that are more in line with basic qualitative data analysis or generic/descriptive qualitative research because I can see only [Fill in the blank: categories, sub-categories, themes]. To remedy this apparent disconnection, please revise your method section so you make it clearer that you have used techniques from [Fill in the blank: grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, etc.] to produce your more generic results instead of using the entire methodology including its typical outcomes (e.g., grounded theory methodology leading to a grounded theory). If you intended to

use the methodology to its fullest, then please present findings that are more consistent with those results regularly produced (Fill in the blank: e.g., grounded theory leading to a grounded theory).

.....

When you list multiple excerpts we as readers have to guess in which excerpt is the evidence for the qualities you are suggesting they express. Please revise so you make it clearer where you are suggesting we can find the support in the data for your assertions about the data.

.....

In the results section, we expect to see exemplary evidence from your data to support your findings. Referring indirectly to your actual data or only paraphrasing your data weakens your arguments and assertions as to what your findings are. To address this concern, please include direct excerpts from your data to support your findings.

.....

According to Margarete Sandelowski's 2010 paper, "What's in a Name? Qualitative Description Revisited," "data never speak for themselves" (p. 79) so please explain to us how each excerpt supports your findings. To do so we ask that you first define the qualitative distinction are trying to convey in this section and then explain to us how this data bit evidences or illustrates your qualitative distinction. In other words, for each piece of potential evidence entered by you into the body of paper, we expect testimony on your part explaining or describing how these examples are supporting your assertions.

.....

For many of your sections, the style in which you present your findings is more in line with what Sandelowski and Barroso (2003) describe as "topical survey." In making this comparison I am saying when I read your findings it seems you are presenting what one participant after another said (i.e., a survey of each one's answers) and what I would like to see is more synthesis of what they said collectively about each category. I think your reporting style shows the drifting that happens throughout the paper between presenting a series of individuals' life-stories and sharing a grounded theory-informed qualitative data analysis of these stories. Please revise your sections so this synthesis of your exemplars can be provided to show stronger evidential connections between the speakers' collective words and your categorical assertions about the meaning of their collective words.

.....

When you report your findings in the table by listing names of your categories in one column and posting excerpts from your data in the other column, we do not gain a clear understanding what meaning the categories have for you and how the examples evidence the qualitative distinctions you are trying to communicate as a result of your qualitative data analysis. In other words, examples are not the same as evidence. To construct a compelling case for your findings, you need to provide testimony that makes the evidential relevance of your exhibits clear regarding the qualitative distinction you are attempting to

argue. Or, more simply stated, please make your findings more evident. To make the results of your qualitative data analysis clearer, please remove the chart and replace it with a category by category narrative presentation in which you first introduce and define the qualitative essence of the category and second explain how the examples serve as evidence to support your assertions of meaning from the data analysis.

.....

Rather than including the tables here, I would add some of this information to your data analysis section in a narrative format. The kinds of tables included are often a tool we use as researchers to map out how out codes become themes, but it isn't something we necessarily need to include for readers.

.....

Just as we ask that authors include evidence to support their qualitative data analysis results, we also ask authors to consider the value of using multiple excerpts for each qualitative distinction being presented in the paper. If a second quote exemplifies a qualitatively different aspect of your finding than the first exemplary quote presented for this particular finding, please make that distinction clear. If the subsequent quotes merely replicate evidential value of the initial quote for this the qualitative distinction, please only use the best piece of evidence. Having multiple quotes providing the same or similar qualitative evidence do not make your findings stronger, their insertion just makes your paper longer. To this end, please note where we have highlighted multiple quotes within sections and either explain each excerpt's unique qualitative difference that makes a difference given the finding you are attempting to evidence in the section or include only the best piece of evidence in your judgment and carefully bring forth the element's evidential aspects in support of your qualitative finding.

.....

Please report the demographic information of your participants in composite form in the body of your paper. We ask you to make this change for two reasons:

1. Giving so much identifiable information about each individual can be a threat to his/her confidentiality especially if you are also including verbatim quotes from these individuals.
 2. The focus of your study is about these individuals as a group, so reporting their demographic information as a group is more in line with your stated purposes. We also ask that you consider moving this information to a section prior to the results because the demographic information of your participants is not a result of your qualitative data analysis.
-

In the Results section of your paper we expect to see the results of your analysis of your data. When you weave in results of other research studies to comment

on your own results it can be confusing to the readers. We would prefer you focus on your own findings produced by your data analysis in the Results section and save the discussion of how your findings relate to findings published in other sources for your Discussion section.

.....

For each section, please first define the qualitative distinction being presented and then explain how your excerpts are evidencing your qualitative claims about them.

After each excerpt, please explain how you see the talk evidencing the qualities you claim it represents.

.....

Please explain how the data represents the quality of which you claim it signifies. Without your testimony, the exhibit must speak for itself which is not good practice in qualitative data analysis because your analytical comments should bring the relationship between the quality asserted and the excerpt presented transparent and coherent making your qualitative claims clearly evidenced by the data.

So, for each section, please first define the qualitative distinction being presented in the category/sub-category and then after each excerpt, please explain how you see the talk evidencing the qualities you claim it represents.

.....

For each finding, please make the three qualitative data analysis components clear:

For component one, **the quality**, please define what you mean by the finding. Without this definition, we don't know what you mean by your finding's qualities.

For component two, **the data**, please introduce the excerpt you suggest evidences the finding's quality. Without the data, we have no evidence upon which to judge your representations of the data's qualities. It is also important we know the source of the data.

For component three, **the analysis**, please explain how the data represents the qualities of which you claim it signifies because your analytical comments should bring the relationship between the quality asserted and the excerpt presented transparent and coherent making your qualitative claims clearly evidenced by the data. Without your testimony, the exhibit must speak for itself, which is not good practice in qualitative data analysis.

So, for each section, please first define the qualitative distinction being presented and then after each excerpt, please explain how you see the talk evidencing the qualities you claim it represents.

As you follow this three-step process, you might find you only need to use one example to evidence your qualitative assertions. Each example provided should be an exhibit for one or more quality analyzed, but listing a series of excerpts exhibiting the same quality does not contribute to the findings; the practice just makes the paper longer. If, however, there are many different qualities to be evidenced, then you should present one example per quality being asserted along with the data-supported analysis articulating each qualitative assertion.

.....

It seems you are reporting the results of your study more like a reporter retelling what happened rather than as a researcher presenting the results of qualitative data analysis.

Discussion Section Comments

Please do not repeat your findings in the Discussion section. Your writing in this section should be about your study's findings, method, context, and importance and not a mere re-presentation of information already presented in your report.

.....

In your discussion section, please include the following elements:

1. Discuss your findings in terms of what was previous known and not know about the focus of your research. Did your findings cohere and/or contrast with previous research on similar groups, locations, people, etc.?
2. Discuss the limitations of your study. These limitations can be organized around simple distinctions of the choices you made in your study regarding who, what, where, when, why, and how. We do not think conducting a qualitative research study in lieu of a quantitative study is a limitation so in this section we suggest refraining from making such observations. Also, please explain how you attempted to limit your limitations (e.g., assessing data saturation or utilizing theoretical sampling).
3. If anything in your results surprised you, please share that experience. That you were able to remain open to the novel, surprising, or unexpected is a positive sign that you worked to maintain a sense of openness, curiosity, and discovery throughout your study.
4. Discuss your position on the generalizability of your results. Qualitative researchers differ as to their positions on whether or not they hold that their findings can be generalized to other settings or situation so it is important you make your position overt on this matter.
5. Discuss the implications your research has for pertinent stakeholders (e.g., future research for other investigators, practice suggestions for practitioners, or policy considerations for administrators).
6. In addressing any of these elements, please make sure your discussion remains directly connected with the study you conducted.

.....

In APA, research reports end with the Discussion section, so please either delete your Conclusion or weave that information into one of your Discussion section elements.

Reference Section Comments

I have noted that some sources cited in the body of your paper are not included in the Reference section so please add citations for these sources to your Reference section.

I have noted that some sources listed in the Reference section do not appear in the body of your paper so please add citations for these sources in the body of your paper or delete the citation from your Reference section.

Writing Style Comments

- **Active Voice:** Please write so the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed by the verb in the sentence. We think qualitative research reporters use active voice to express their actions as the instrument clearly and to help readers focus on who did what in the study.
- **First Person:** Please use personal pronouns instead of third person to describe actions taken in a study. We think qualitative research reporters use first person to avoid ambiguity and confusion in reporting who conducted the study.
- **Human Actors:** Please use human actors to express the actions taken in the study instead of inanimate objects and thus avoid anthropomorphism. We think qualitative research reporters report they and not the research or the study conducted the research or the study.
- **Hedging:** Please use hedges to restrict as in setting or qualifying conditions relative to the results being reported to avoid extremes or limit meaning. We think this reporting style fits with constructionist, constructivist, phenomenological, naturalistic, exploratory, descriptive, interpretive, post-modern, and critical research approaches. Here are some examples of hedges you can employ in your paper:
 - **Propositions** to express results for consideration and not “results as the facts” by using “such as,” “may,” or “perhaps”
 - **Possibilities** to express a likelihood or certainty of results and not “results as the truth” by using “seem,” “appear,” “suggest,” “speculate,” or “imply”
 - **Approximations** to express quantity, frequency, degree, and time of results by using “generally,” “approximately,” “most,” “some,” “many,” “few,” or “frequently”
 - **Conditions** to express co-dependent or local situations or circumstances relative to results by reporting “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” “why,” and “how”

American Psychological Association (APA) Style Resources

At TQR we follow the guidelines set forth in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed., 2010). Here are some resources you can consult to help bring your paper into greater compliance with APA style:

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Purdue Online Writing Lab. (2011). *APA style* [Web site]. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University. Retrieved from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

Notes for the Reviewer on the TQR “brand”

Tone of Comments

- Our reputation among authors, based on e-mail feedback we have received for years, is politeness and helpfulness
- We are different because we take out the evaluative language and that gives authors hope and motivation
- The tone is one of interest, friendliness, curiosity, challenge, expansion of thinking—all the things we think go into good teaching
- Use tentative language—we ask authors to do this when they draw their conclusions and want to make definitive statements—leave room for movement (e.g., I am wondering, it sounds as if, might we or you consider...?)
- Bottom line—think of ways to say difficult things so they can be heard and the best way is to take a one-down position even though we are the “experts” so to speak. Some examples: instead of saying “this is awkward” or “this makes no sense” one could say, “my reading was interrupted here, could you please check the wording and revise?” Or “what you say on page 6 and what you say here seem to be different; in order to not confuse your readers could you please use the same terminology...?” Or “I think I know what you mean here, but this is important and I don’t want readers to dismiss this because they are unsure of your point.”
- We are gracious, even with those who clearly have been charged or jazzed by a qualitative course and know very little, but thought it would be easy to conduct qualitative inquiry

Developmental Relationship with Authors

- We are invested in our authors’ success—their success is our success
- We are developing mentoring relationships with our authors no matter where they are or their level of education or experience
- We ask questions to help authors develop their thinking, rather than to just evaluate or say the writing is unacceptable
- We need to remember that we are helping to mentor and teach the next generation of the teachers and academics—our voice can be quite influential in the shaping of what good qualitative research looks like
- When authors are getting frustrated, we can reassure them that we will stick with them, and that we do worry about author fatigue, but we only want first-class work put online so they can feel proud

Value Added Suggestions

- We don’t just say what was wrong, but offer suggestions for how to modify

- Our greatest success at getting cooperation lies in telling our authors WHY we are asking for such modifications (e.g., I am afraid that without this additional information, readers will become suspicious of your findings)
- To substantiate our suggestions we offer references that authors might read and use—back to that mentoring and teaching
- Offer compliments on sentences, passages, or paragraphs that are well-written and add your thoughts as to why you believe it to be so

We appreciate the time and effort it takes to complete a thoughtful and effective review. Thank you very much for your commitment to supporting the TQR community of qualitative researchers in this way!

References

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Chenail, R. J., Duffy, M., St. George, S., & Wulff, D. (2011). Facilitating coherence across qualitative research papers. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(1), 263-275. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol16/iss1/17>
- Cooper, R. (2011). Appraising qualitative research reports: A developmental approach. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(6), 1733-1742. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol16/iss6/14>
- Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 33(1), 77–84.
- Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2003). Classifying the findings in qualitative studies. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(7), 905-923.

Appendix

The Qualitative Report (TQR) Rubric (2016, Version 1.2)

Minimum 13 points required to enter TQR Manuscript Development Program (MDP)

Total points out of 20:

Author:	Title:			
NSU Works #:	Reviewer:			
Performance Area and Criteria	Non-Performance: includes none or minimal important elements of performance area (0 points)	Partial: includes some but not all important elements of performance area (1 point)	Complete: includes all (or almost all) important elements of performance area (2 points)	Points:
1. <u>Opening Elements:</u> A. Title is 12 words or less B. Title indicates most important elements of report, i.e., population, focus, methodology, and findings C. Abstract is 200 words or less D. Abstract reflects organizational structure of paper (i.e., presents problem/focus of study, research questions, participants, methodology, findings, key points from discussion of findings) E. Paper includes Key Words F. Key Words include term for research method	Elements needing attention:	Elements needing attention:	All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:	
2. <u>Introductory Section:</u> A. Statement of research problem B. Statement of research objectives C. Indication of why local study has global importance D. Statement of rationale for study E. Naming of intended audience F. Indication of benefit of research (answers the “so what?” question)	Elements needing attention:	Elements needing attention:	All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:	
3. <u>Literature Review:</u> A. Offers synopsis of current literature on topic in terms of content and research processes used B. Demonstrates gap in literature re: content and/or research methods C. Explains how study will fill gap D. Provides reflections on literature vs. series of reports on sources	Elements needing attention:	Elements needing attention:	All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:	

<p>E. Includes literature that helps define phenomenon shows what is known and not known about phenomenon</p> <p>F. Explains how literature led to research questions</p>				
<p>4. <u>Role of Researcher:</u></p> <p>A. Describes researcher’s context, interest in topic and investment in study/intentions</p> <p>B. Makes clear who did what throughout study procedures</p> <p>C. Provides statement of IRB or other third-party approval secured to conduct study</p> <p>D. Describes how ethical issues were considered and addressed</p> <p>E. Describes how researcher bias was addressed</p> <p>F. Discusses steps taken to ensure rigor and trustworthiness of findings</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	
<p>5. <u>Methods Section:</u></p> <p>A. Explains how research design fits with research objectives</p> <p>B. Explains what type of qualitative inquiry was used</p> <p>C. Provides step by step description of procedures, with corresponding headings</p> <p>D. Describes sampling strategy and participant recruitment</p> <p>E. Explains steps of data generation, collection, and data analysis, as well as rationale for each design choice</p> <p>F. Cites literature used to guide procedures</p> <p>G. Tells reader what constitutes data</p> <p>H. Provides examples to illustrate steps of data analysis</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	
<p>6. <u>Results Section:</u></p> <p>A. Tells reader how results will be organized</p> <p>B. Tells reader how results are derived from analysis</p> <p>C. Findings produced consistent with methodology indicated</p> <p>D. Presents exemplary evidence to support findings</p> <p>E. Explains how each excerpt supports assertions/findings</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	

<p>F. Each excerpt illustrates unique qualitative distinction (rather than including multiple quotes to illustrate one finding)</p> <p>G. Presents demographic information of participants in composite form</p>				
<p>7. <u>Discussion Section:</u></p> <p>A. Does not include discussion in results section</p> <p>B. Does not include findings in discussion section</p> <p>C. Does not repeat information already presented in paper</p> <p>D. Discusses how findings compare/contrast with what was known and/or not known in the literature</p> <p>E. Discusses limitations of study</p> <p>F. Discusses position on generalizability of results</p> <p>G. Discusses implications of findings</p> <p>H. Indicates area of future research</p> <p>I. Ends paper with discussion section</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	
<p>8. <u>References:</u></p> <p>A. Citations in text correspond to sources in reference list</p> <p>B. References are in APA style</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	
<p>9. <u>Writing:</u></p> <p>A. Effective use of headings</p> <p>B. Fluent English language</p> <p>C. Clear, precise writing</p> <p>D. Correct grammar and usage</p> <p>E. Avoids bias in language</p> <p>F. Strong mechanics of style</p> <p>G. Active voice</p> <p>H. Contextualized language reflects interpretive stance</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	
<p>10. <u>Coherence:</u></p> <p>A. Between title and abstract</p> <p>B. Between abstract and body of paper</p> <p>C. Between focus of study and literature reviewed</p> <p>D. Between research questions and methodology</p> <p>E. Between methodology presented and methods employed</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>Elements needing attention:</p>	<p>All important elements included. -or- Only the following element is missing:</p>	

F. Between methodology and findings G. Between findings and research questions H. Between findings and stated implications				
Summary				

**Copyright 2012, 2016: Ronald J. Chenail, Robin Cooper, Laura Patron, and Nova
Southeastern University**

Revised: January 20, 2016