# Presenting Findings from Qualitative Research:

# One Size Does Not Fit All!

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**Abstract**

In this chapter, we explore the state of our field in terms of ways to present qualitative findings. We analyze all articles based on qualitative research methods published in the *Academy of Management Journal* from 2010 to 2017 and supplement this by informally surveying colleagues about their 'favorite' qualitative authors. As a result, we identify five ways of presenting qualitative findings in research articles. We suggest that each approach has advantages as well as limitations, and that the type of data and theorizing is an important consideration in determining the most appropriate approach for the presentation of findings. We hope that by identifying these approaches, we enrich the way authors, reviewers and editors approach the presentation of qualitative findings.

Key Words: qualitative research; interpretive research; findings presentation; templates; vignettes; writing.

## Introduction

How can qualitative researchers most effectively present their rich findings in a journal article? This is an important and difficult question that continues to be the source of much discussion among academics (e.g. Gehman et al., 2017). In this chapter we address this question by identifying different ways that qualitative researchers from an interpretive tradition have organized their empirical findings in management and organization theory publications. Specifically, we focus on the findings section of published papers to investigate different presentation approaches.

Most management and organization theory journals today endorse a format for empirical papers that is reminiscent of the physical sciences (see Strang & Siler, 2017). In particular, there is considerable emphasis on the use of tables to portray qualitative data, and findings sections are commonly structured according to specific templates such as the "Gioia" template (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Viewed positively, these templates can provide 'rigor' to qualitative research and facilitate the evaluation of research by establishing shared conventions (Patriotta, 2017). Yet, it is also important to be wary of rich findings being forced into narrow boxes, because 'rigor' can become 'rigor mortis,' as a recent Academy of Management Journal (AMJ) editorial puts it (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). Additionally, other scholars have suggested that excessive conformity to template-based research approaches can lead to dull and uninspiring scholarship – the opposite of what we expect of qualitative research (Cornelissen, 2017).

In this chapter, we identify different ways of presenting qualitative findings and consider the strengths and concerns associated with each. We do that by analyzing all interpretive/qualitative papers in AMJ that appeared in print or were forthcoming from January 2010 to December 2017. In addition, we analyzed articles published in other organizational journals which we scanned to identify other ways of presenting qualitative findings. Overall, we argue that different approaches should be used for different types of data and styles of theorizing. We also submit that authors should be encouraged to structure their findings in ways that are most appropriate for their empirical discoveries and research perspectives because this is critical for meeting standards of trustworthiness in qualitative research (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, qualitative authors should find the most appropriate way to write up findings so that readers can appreciate the richness of the underlying data and evaluate the rigor of the analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Myers, 2013) while telling a convincing and engaging story (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007).

## Identifying Presentation Approaches

The impetus for this chapter came from our observations as authors, readers and editors that the "Gioia data structure" (sometimes called the Gioia chart) (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013) has come to dominate qualitative organizational articles with reviewers or editors often asking for this particular technique to show findings. We wondered whether a detailed review of published articles would substantiate our hunches. Inspired by Langley and Abdallah's (2011) explanation of different templates for qualitative case studies, and Gehman et al.'s (2017) account of perceptions regarding the presentation of qualitative research findings, we wanted to systematically uncover different approaches that authors use to present their qualitative research findings.

We therefore engaged in a process of identifying and analyzing all interpretive/qualitative articles published in AMJ between 2010 and 2017. We selected AMJ as our primary data source because it is well-respected among organizational scholars and highly cited. It publishes a wide variety of articles that reflects the heterogeneity of our field. We also noted that AMJ editorial teams had been concerned with the increasing use of templates, promoting a move away from a "common analysis recipe" (Eisenhardt, et al., 2016, pg. 1119) and away from one-size-fits-all writing and data display formats (Bansal & Corley, 2011).

Therefore, we arranged our analysis with attention to 2013 as the focal year because it was the year in which a well-cited article on the "Gioia methodology" and its related approach to findings presentation was published (Gioia et al., 2013). We therefore selected AMJ articles published between 2010 – 2017 as our 'observation window' in order to identify potential trends regarding usage over time, and to reveal other ways of presenting findings that were used. We gathered these qualitative studies, using keywords where possible, and reading the abstract and/or introduction of the articles to determine whether the study was based on qualitative methods. This process led to a total of 92 articles. We then conducted a hand search to identify all qualitative studies that were forthcoming (in-press), resulting in a set of 103 interpretive/ qualitative articles that comprised our dataset.

Next, one of the authors read each article and categorized it according to primary data type, anatomy of the findings section, representation tools, and presence of a "Gioia chart". 'Primary data type' refers to the primary source of data used such as, interviews, ethnographic observations, public/private documents, and archival/historical documents. The code 'anatomy of the findings section' explained how the findings section was structured. Additionally, we identified any other 'representation tools' (such as tables, graphs, models or other images) that had been used to display the findings, with particular attention to the use of the "Gioia chart". All analyses were confirmed by other authors.

Figure 1 shows our detailed tabulations over time of the AMJ articles. We observed three different ways of presenting findings: the Gioia approach, a vignettes approach, and a temporal phases approach. The Gioia approach included the use of a figure illustrating the theoretical coding structure ("Gioia chart") and a findings section structured according to the same coding pattern. The vignettes approach was characterized by the use of very short stories and other text to show the findings. Finally, the temporal phases approach was characterized by a findings section organized by sequential phases or historical eras. (A detailed listing of all articles and our coding is available from the first author on request.)

[Figure 1 about here]

We found that the Gioia chart was used even before the Gioia et al. (2013) article was published; its use peaked in 2014 and 2015—with almost 60 % of qualitative articles published in AMJ using the Gioia approach. However, we observed that the prevalence of this approach decreased in the past two years. In contrast, we note that there has been an increase in the number of articles using vignettes to structure their findings. Specifically, over 40% of the qualitative articles published in 2017 (including those in-press) used a "vignette" approach to present their findings and almost 38% of the qualitative articles published in 2017 used a "temporal" approach.

We wondered if there were different approaches of displaying findings in other journals, and therefore expanded our search. We relied on our own collective knowledge of articles that were memorable because of the way qualitative findings were presented. And because we believed that well-presented findings contribute strongly to the appeal of articles, we decided to gather the opinions of other scholars. Each of us informally canvassed others in our own networks of researchers – asking people to tell us their three favorite qualitative authors whose work they "love to read". Since we were a team of four, we collectively developed a lengthy list, and then reduced it to authors who were named at least twice. This exercise led to the identification of our "fan favorites" (listed alphabetically): Steve Barley, Beth Bechky, Paula Jarzabkowski, Kate Kellogg, Tom Lawrence, Wanda Orlikowski, Michael Rosen, Paul Tracey, John Van Maanen, Karl Weick, and Tammar Zilber. Next, we searched for (and analyzed) articles by our "fan favorites," that were published outside our AMJ set of articles, thus identifying two further presentation approaches: long data excerpts and anthropological approaches. In the next section we explain all five approaches.

## A Typology of Approaches for Presenting Qualitative Findings

We identified five ideal-type approaches for the presentation of qualitative findings. We point out that these are not necessarily exclusive — sometimes we observed that articles blended approaches — but we believe that our resulting typology heuristically emphasizes the multiple ways in which authors can present their findings. In the text below we provide a description of each ideal-type, examples of how it has been used, and the associated advantages or disadvantages. Table 1 provides a summary of these five approaches.

[Table 1 about here]

### The Gioia Approach

Our analysis of AMJ articles showed the prevalence of the Gioia approach, particularly in proximity to the publication of Gioia et al. (2013). Its characteristics include a findings section that is set out according to levels of theoretical coding associated with a particular understanding of the grounded theory approach (Gioia et al., 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Articles in this category commonly include a figure (i.e., the Gioia chart) with boxes and arrows to show first, second and third order codes that are derived from analysis of the qualitative data. First order codes are closest to the data, and aggregated to develop second order codes, that are again aggregated to a more theoretical level in the development of third order codes.

The structure of the findings section closely follows the codes in the Gioia chart; authors use the first, second and third order codes as building blocks for the text which is arranged in a list-like format. The emphasis is very much on 'showing' snippets of data to illustrate the contents within a code. In many cases, the relationships between codes are discussed in a following section that includes a model or diagram. The logic underlying this approach seems to be one of providing the pieces of puzzle and then assembling it (what has been deemed a move from photographs to movie, Gehman et al., 2017:3).

While this approach gives space for authors to both tell about, and show their data, the emphasis seems to fall on showing data as evidence of conceptual categories. We noted that the findings section usually contains a number of 'evidence tables' that provide illustrations (usually raw data excerpts) for the different codes listed in the data structure figure. Authors also typically back up theoretical claims with interview quotations, field notes excerpts, and occasionally excerpts from archival documents presented in a matter-of-fact manner.

The Gioia approach is well-represented in AMJ and it is also featured in other mainstream publications in our field. As a specific example catalogued during our analysis, and authored by one of our "fan favorites," consider Dacin, Munir, & Tracey (2010). This highly-cited paper uses the ritual of High Table dining at the University of Cambridge to elaborate upon a process of institutional maintenance – the British class system. The authors use the findings section of the paper to explain the scripted nature of the dining ritual that encourages particular behaviors. They then link this "performance" of dining (pg. 1408) to a transformation of the image and identity of the participants; and they ultimately explain how these two lead to a shift in the students' social position— enabling them to play dominant roles in "the establishment in Britain" (pg. 1413). In this paper, the sub-section headings in the findings section coincide with the aggregate (theoretical) dimensions of the authors' Gioia chart (pg. 1402).

The Gioia approach has been particularly important in establishing the legitimacy of qualitative research and has helped to mitigate skeptical attitudes towards the broader interpretive tradition, to some extent. More specifically, it served to show that systematic analysis is very much part of qualitative research. The approach also has the advantage of allowing authors to display the breadth of their data along with the groundedness of their theoretical claims. Because, it is based on coding small text segments (that will fit in a box in the evidence tables), it seems particularly suitable for research based on interviews and archival data (although our analysis revealed rare instances where the approach was used with data gathered through observations (e.g. Harrison & Rouse, 2015; Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012)).

Despite these clear distinctions, we suggest that the Gioia approach can limit authors' ability to showcase the richness of their empirical findings. This limitation is particularly relevant for studies of situated work dynamics (Barley & Kunda, 2011), data from extensive ethnographic studies (see Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, and Lê, 2014 on the difference between raw and recomposed field notes), and for processual or longitudinal data where dynamics across space and time are significant (Nicolini, 2010). This is because the emphasis on a linear data structure inherent in the Gioia approach 'dissects' the complex and holistic nature of qualitative data (Tsoukas, 2017).

Interestingly, in our observations, the Gioia approach was sometimes used in creative ways to overcome some of the limitations mentioned above. For example, Pratt's (2008) codes correspond with different situations or processes and rich illustrations are provided in the text, thereby delegating an 'auxiliary/support' role to tables (also see Vaccaro & Palazzo, 2015). Other authors supplement quotes in the tables with contextual details within tables, such as juxtaposing the interview situation and interviewee information against particular quotations (e.g. Walsh & Bartunek, 2011).

**The Vignettes Approach**

The use of vignettes privileges a more narrative-based mode of presenting findings. A vignette is an evocative description or an account of a short event or episode. In articles where authors use vignettes as the key mechanism for showing their findings, the findings section is usually organized around a master theme with different sub-sections showcasing multiple aspects of the overarching theme or idea. To emphasize this, some scholars re-label the findings section according to the theme they are exploring in the paper (e.g. Anteby & Molnar, 2012). Thus, this approach foregrounds the interconnections among categories and gives space to show the findings in ways that capture more richness in an easily-readable and credible way. This approach thus addresses the credibility criterion for qualitative research that is similar to the concept of internal validity.

For example, in her study of patient advocates who mediate conflicts between patients' families and staff, Heaphy (2017) arranged her findings section around the different types of interactions in which the mediators engaged. Similarly, Maguire and Hardy (2013) presented their findings on the study of chemical risk assessment and management in Canada in the form of three separate context-laden narratives: the Canadian risk assessment and management practices, specific practices relevant to the chemicals studied, and discursive work around struggles over the meaning of chemicals-at-risk. Further, Anteby and Molnar's (2012) study on the endurance of organizational identity showed rich descriptive accounts in the findings section that were organized by aspects of identity endurance.

As such, in the vignettes approach, the findings section is usually characterized by an amalgam of show and tell: a narrative or description (telling) underlines the section with vignettes providing the evidence and examples for the themes discussed (showing). Authors make use of rhetorical devices to connect vignettes to these themes by labelling in specific ways (especially when they appear in boxes) or providing a strong framing argument before presenting the vignettes as a way to highlight the category of interest and the focal points of the article.

In the vignettes approach, raw data extracts are rare; instead, authors re-construct scenes (the vignettes) that make readers "feel like they are there". These vignettes may feature dialogues, interactions, characters, and even fully-fledged stories (Abdallah, 2017). Sometimes composite vignettes are constructed by meshing together data from various informants and situations into a single character or scene. When data extracts appear, they are usually presented together with rich contextual descriptions (i.e., description of the situation in which an informant conveyed a certain statement). These techniques facilitate the presentation of findings in a way that engages the reader at almost an experiential level.

This approach fits (and is usually found) in articles based on observational data and/or an ethnographic perspective as it allows authors to convey their findings in ways that put readers in 'the thick of it' by giving them a sense of being there. The vignettes approach, however, has the disadvantage of reducing the universe of data which authors are able to showcase; in a way, it reflects the trade-off between depth and breadth. Perhaps as a way to compensate for that trade-off, some authors blend vignettes with aspects of the Gioia approach such as by using a Gioia-inspired data chart to organize the narrative vignette (e.g., Glaser, 2017) or by including short data snippets to illustrate categories or themes (see Pratt, 2009 for a similar strategy). That is, vignettes are sometimes used to give readers a rich overview of the studied setting or object of interest, and then the multiple aspects under investigation are presented via tables with raw data extracts (e.g., Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015).

**The Temporal Phases Approach**

While this approach is closely associated with longitudinal research, there is not a one-to-one matching between them. This is because we see articles using different ways to present their longitudinal data including the Gioia approach (e.g., Reay, Goodrick, Waldorff, & Casebeer, 2017; Schüssler, Rüling & Wittneben, 2014), the vignettes approach (e.g., Vaast & Levina, 2006; Smets, Morris & Greenwood, 2012), and the anthropological approach (e.g., Zilber, 2002). In our categorization, what makes the temporal approach distinctive is the way that the findings are structured according to specific episodes or phases within a clearly set out defined temporal narrative. That is, findings are presented within a chronological timeline to evidence how specific dynamics take place within a given moment and how they evolve across time.

The specific way in which data is presented varies greatly and sometimes reflects a mix and match between this approach and the other previous ones. Yet overall the findings section is organized to reveal emerging themes according to specific temporal phases. These 'temporal categories' are then populated with tables, narratives, vignettes or even semi-quantitative data (e.g., frequency description).

One of the main advantages of the temporal approach is that it maintains the integrity of findings and produces a readable narrative. By organizing the findings section according to the way in which the issues of interest have evolved in the research context (time is key mechanism behind the way we perceive social reality), the temporal approach enables authors to tell a very clear theoretical story. The approach also produces a narrative that can be shared with practitioners since it is not (only) structured according to etic themes of significance for academics. In addition, using time as a structuring principle allows for greater transparency because the claims made by the authors are open to re-assessment by others; it is possible to re-examine whether and how a specific process took place at a certain time.

A possible shortcoming of this approach is that in the effort to create phases of a common process or dynamic, authors may end up reducing the complex nature of social phenomena in ways that make them overly coherent. In a way, this is an interpretative challenge common in most qualitative research that is perhaps more salient in this approach. Authors must thus remain vigilant to watching out for what aspects are being left in the background and what sub-stories and related processes are overlooked since there is a risk of trading off plurality and ignoring potential pathways in favor of a coherent single narrative. For example, Gutierrez, Howard-

Grenville, and Scully (2010) in a study of change efforts in the Catholic Church explicitly included a table showing how it 'could have gone otherwise' at various junctures in an effort to keep the theorizing equifinal.

The temporal phases approach, featured prominently in the later AMJ articles we analyzed, may possibly represent a ripple effect of the 2013 special issue on process research (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas & Van de Ven, 2013). We note that such articles have increased in popularity with growing attention to research that puts process and time at the center of their theoretical attention (yet not all papers using this approach are processual). A recent paper that employs this approach is Tom Lawrence's work on "High Stakes Institutional Translation" (Lawrence, 2017). The author organized the findings sections by four clearly demarcated "waves" that unfold over time. Other examples of the temporal approach include, Wright and Zammuto (2013) and Lok and De Rond (2013). For instance, Wright and Zammuto (2013) organize their findings by temporal 'stages' while explaining how the field of English county cricket experienced institutional change; Lok and De Rond (2013) rely on temporal vignettes in order to embed their rich narrative within five timed phases.

**The Long Data Excerpts Approach**

The long data excerpts approach is similar to the vignettes approach but presents findings in terms of raw data rather than author-developed short stories. This approach tends to subvert the typical relation between data and theory because the findings section is structured in a more empirically-led format; in contrast, other approaches, including the vignettes approach, usually employ a more theory-led strategy. Rather than presenting a general theoretical narrative in which data serves to support the identification of theoretical concepts, the long data excerpts approach organizes findings around raw data such as meaningful extracts of conversations, exchanges during meetings, or other forms of dialogue that can be analyzed. By presenting data in an unfiltered way, authors attempt to respect the integrity of the interchange.

An important principle in the long data excerpts approach is that data is not presented as an illustration of a theoretical point. Instead, authors show large segments of the raw data to preserve its richness, and then later engage in analyzing specific aspects as they are relevant in developing theory. This approach reflects the data-driven traditions in the social sciences such as linguistic-based scholarship; and, more specifically, conversational analysis with its emphasis on the presentation of (long) extracts of data upon which different relevant themes are explored (e.g., Jarzabkowski & Le, 2017; Llewellyn & Burrow, 2008).

We note that the long data excerpts approach is rare in contemporary organization and management journals. This may be at least partly because current trends require authors to focus on high-level theorizing (Barley, 2016; Hambrick, 2007). While attention to theorizing is certainly evident in articles employing the large data excerpts approach, theoretical ideas are usually developed after displaying (raw) data – rather than before – in contrast to the tradition in many journals. We also see that the research traditions underpinning this approach have not yet been widely diffused in our field despite a number of authors who have taken this approach over the past decades (e.g., Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010). And finally, we note that in a very practical sense it is very difficult to present large segments of data within the page limits of a normal journal article.

The long data excerpts approach is a particularly effective way to capture data in its full richness. For example, in a recent article published in *Organization Studies*, Jarzabkowski and Lê (2017) present lengthy extracts from observational data of exchanges during management meetings about how to respond to imposed organizational demands. They show how humorous micro-interactional dynamics form an important component of collective responses, and they do this by providing data excerpts that take half a page or more to display. In doing so, the richness of the interchanges between and among people at the meeting is clearly portrayed, and readers can almost feel that they were also present in that event.

One of the main advantages of this approach is that it preserves the emic nature of the research setting in theoretical discussions. This is because the emphasis is on showing large 'chunks' of data (e.g., a whole dialogue or meeting) and then exploring the relevant themes (contrast this with approaches that privilege 'thin' slices of data). The findings thus fit the embodied experience of the researcher and informants. Another benefit of this approach is that it makes the interpretive work of the authors relatively transparent. While similar to the Gioia approach in this regard, the critical difference here is that large excerpts must show not only the link between theoretical ideas and (raw) data, but also show readers how the authors are making sense of a situation or dialogue.

Relatedly, a disadvantage of this approach is that even though large segments of data are shown, the amount of data that authors are able to display remains limited. As a result, there can be a difficult trade-off between breadth and depth. More specifically, this approach relies on the presentation of a relatively small number of specific episodes or dialogues that authors claim are representative of (more) general issues and processes. In addition, this approach also carries the risk that authors become overly attached to specific data extracts, and as a consequence lose sight of the overall empirical story. While these shortcomings also exist in the vignettes approach, vignettes are rhetorical artifices integrating data from multiple sources, whereas in the long data excerpts approach, authors are limited to specific extracts.

**The Anthropological Approach**

The anthropological approach is linked to ethnographic traditions (e.g. Van Maanen, 1979; 2011) and instantiates methodological principles from anthropology and qualitative sociology (e.g., Chicago school, urban sociology, science and technology studies). Scholars focus on narratives and thick descriptions as a means of capturing the complex nature of social phenomena (Geertz, 1973). Whereas the vignettes approach highlights a narrative of interest, and the temporal approach organizes according to time periods, the anthropological approach focuses on providing a holistic representation of the data. Authors usually structure the findings section in what appears as a classic case study: a long description with headings and sub-headings that organize the text according to the points deemed salient given their theoretical concerns.

This contrasts significantly with a concern that authors may do too much 'slicing and dicing' data into small chunks "relegated to tables in the interest of formulaic abstraction and conceptual summary" (Van Maanen & de Rond, 2017, p.398). Instead, in the anthropological approach, the goal is to craft a persuasive text in which the relationships across themes of interest and the lived experience of the research are foregrounded in the narrative. When dealing with multiple cases, authors typically present them in their integrity while emphasizing their unique aspects and differences, and only exploring specific points in the discussion section (e.g., Bechky & Chung, 2017). This echoes an attention to 'better stories' as the building block for theorizing (see Dyer & Wilkins, 1991)

This approach allows authors freedom to organize the data into an in-depth story (or stories) rich in contextual details, thus facilitating the development of a manuscript that can fully engage readers. For example, in an article in *Organization Science*, Bechky (2006) provides a rich narrative of her field setting and the work of technicians to reveal key features about role-based coordination in temporary organizations. Similarly, in her study of the Israeli rape crisis center, in an article published in AMJ before the time period we studied, Zilber (2002) enriches the findings section by building on her lived experiences in order to present vivid accounts of the empirical context. Another, rather striking example of the anthropological approach is Michael Rosen's (1985) work on the interrelationship between social action and culture leading to bureaucratic control and power published in the *Journal of Management*. This article provides readers with rich description of the annual breakfast ritual at an advertising agency, and then draws on the description in making a theoretical connection (Rosen, 1985).

We see that the anthropological approach relies on the kind of rich, in-depth data normally associated with ethnographic research. While this approach to findings presentation matches with the main points of the vignettes approach in terms of showing engaging stories, in the anthropological approach there is even less distinction between description and data (showing and telling). The narrative presentations in an anthropological approach sometimes weave together interpretation and data excerpts — leading to an integrative presentation of findings, instead of an excerpt-based one as discussed by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011).

In articles based on historical or longitudinal data, the anthropological approach can appear very similar to some of the characteristics of the temporal phases approach. However, the temporal approach privileges episodes in a timeline-based structure, whereas in the anthropological approach, the underlying principle for structuring the findings is not time but the different aspects and processes evolving across time. That is, authors do not structure the historical data into 'chronological' temporal stages (e.g., Hardy & Maguire, 2010) but rather try to capture the inner workings of the 'lived' time and process (e.g., Rojas, 2010; Gehman, Trevino, & Garud, 2013).

A clear disadvantage of the anthropological approach is that it requires authors to be highly skilled at writing in an engaging way. In addition, in this approach it may be difficult for readers to clearly distinguish between interpretation and 'raw' data. This is because in the effort to construct a more holistic presentation of findings, authors engage in a form of fictionalization of facts (Van Maanen, 1979). They must foreground certain aspects over others in a given situation. Thus, a concern associated with this approach (similar to challenges with the temporal phases approach) is that when presenting a single understandable story, it may be difficult to give sufficient attention to the inherent points of contestation, multiple voices, and internal inconsistencies.

Overall, our analysis of qualitative manuscripts reveals that different approaches to presenting findings may be best suited to particular types of data and different research traditions. In the next section we explain our key points regarding the five approaches.

## Discussion & Conclusions

Reflecting on the similarities and differences across the five approaches to presenting qualitative findings (Table 1), we note that each approach comes with both advantages and disadvantages. Some approaches tend to focus on breadth, somewhat at the expense of depth, and vice-versa; and in addition approaches range from tabular to narrative forms of presenting data. To some extent, this reflects the classic issue in methodological discussions on 'tables' vs 'tableaus' (Sandelowski, 2003). For example, the Gioia approach presents an overview of theoretically significant themes with examples of (raw) data inserted into evidence tables with limited contextual information. In contrast, the long data excerpt and anthropological approaches give more prominence to the empirical story and emphasize rich, in-depth description of context.

Thus, as we noted throughout this chapter, specific approaches lend themselves more to different types of data and theoretical perspectives. Authors theorizing from an ethnographic perspective or employing a processual or practice-based perspective are more likely to employ an approach that allows for depth and narrative (e.g., anthropological approach). Articles based on interviews and archival research may be more naturally suited to tabular forms of representation. And in addition, authors situated in research traditions where the presentation of data is tightly inter-connected with interpretation are more likely to employ a long data excerpts approach.

While we presented the approaches as highly distinguishable, there is certainly variation within each. Authors sometimes incorporate strategies from various approaches into one article. For example, Stiglianai and Ravasi (2012) combine a Gioia data structure with a temporal presentation of findings; Glaser (2017) used a Gioia data structure in conjunction with vignettes in order to present findings. This seems like a fruitful strategy as it may enable authors to reduce the shortcomings and augment a certain data presentation structure. However, large scale mixing of presentation approaches may confuse readers if the epistemological unity is disrupted. Finally, we note that some authors seem to create their own approach. Following other recent reflections on qualitative research (Cornelissen 2017; Gehman et al. 2017), we believe that such plurality is important to protect because decisions of appropriateness should be made on an article by article basis. There is danger in trying to make one size fit all.

Indeed, the intention behind our ‘mapping’ exercise is not to establish the boundaries of findings presentation. Our goal is more modestly to make authors, readers, and reviewers sensitive to the existence of multiple ways to present qualitative data — some of which are still relatively uncommon in our field. As others have already discussed, clear conventions facilitate communication among researchers across different research traditions and provide common expectations which may help to assess contributions where a ‘boilerplate’ is appropriately missing (Patriotta, 2017; Pratt, 2009).

In addition to these reasons why templates are important, it also may be that templates provide qualitative researchers with a starting point that streamlines their research process and provides them with a set of tools that can be used to develop their research ideas. We note that most authors whose work we analyzed here seem to use a limited set of approaches for presenting qualitative data. Whether this is due to personal preference or disciplinary norms is an open question. We suspect that the review process plays an important part in making authors fit their work into specific templates (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Research investigating the process of academic publishing has indeed shown that the review process is an interactive process in which peers shape manuscripts into specific avenues (Gross, 2017).

Finally, we would like to reflect on the striking absence of visual data analysis in the approaches discussed; almost all of them seem to be structured for, and according to textual data. This is despite increasing attention to the visual dimension in our field and across the social sciences as a whole (Meyer, Höllerer, Jancsary & Van Leeuwen, 2013). We believe that some of the approaches described above could be strengthened by the use of images beyond diagrams and similar representations (LeBaron, Jarzabkowki, Pratt & Fetzer, 2018). Vignettes for example might be constructed in relation to drawings; temporal phases might be paired together with photographs or video images of a given setting or process across time. Also, descriptive visualizations (e.g., word clouds, ethno-arrays), photographs and even artistic paintings hold strong possibilities for enhancing our capacity to showcase evidence and tell compelling stories (Abramson & Dohan, 2015; Cidell, 2010). We thus imagine that as the visual dimension firmly enters our publications, new approaches for such new types of evidence will emerge.

To conclude, we voice our strong support for variety in presenting qualitative findings. It is important to allow authors to experiment with different ways of showcasing findings in order to best match with their epistemic orientations and preferences. Thus, while there is certainly an affinity between approaches and nature of data, employing different ways to present findings may enable authors to reveal specific aspects of their work. In gathering our set of “fan favorite” authors, we note that all approaches were associated with at least one fan favorite. This speaks to the memorable joy of reading well-written qualitative articles and the importance of plurality. We suggest that our study shows how variety in presentation style can be critical to developing high quality articles, and it reinforces a basic principle that the choice of how findings are presented should ultimately be that of the authors, since it is they who know the data best.

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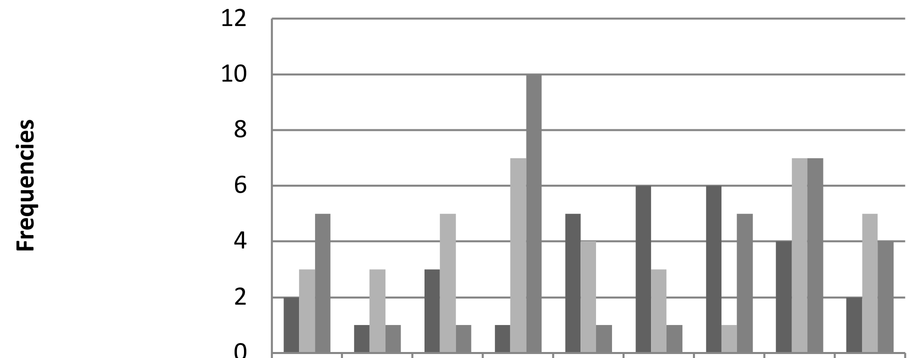
**Figure 1: Approaches in AMJ Interpretive/Qualitative Articles 2010 to 2017**




| | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | In-Press |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gioia Approach | 2 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| Vignettes Approach | 3 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 5 |
| Temporal Appraoch | 5 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 4 |

**Table 1: Typology of Approaches for Presenting Qualitative Findings**

| Approach | Description | Primary Data Source | Advantages | Concerns | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Gioia** | Theoretical coding structure used to organize text; Gioia chart illustrates coding; Data tables organized by coding structure; Snippets of text provided. | Interviews/ Archival | Clarifies match between data segments and theoretical coding; Guides reader in following analytic pathway; Resonates well with reviewers due to familiarity. Indicates 'rigor' as widely understood. | Text segments (snippets) reduce richness of data; Tends to focus on linear data structure. | Dacin et al. (2010)<br>Tracey & Phillips (2016) |
| **Vignettes** | Short stories derived from data organize text; Tables use vignettes to illustrate aspects of phenomenon. | Ethnographic | Provide insights into episodes within the data; Preserve richness of particular parts of data. | Some vignettes highlighted, others missing or downplayed; Difficult to assess whether analysis is systematic | Heaphy (2017)<br>Maguire & Hardy (2013) |
| **Temporal Phases** | Text organized to present story that unfolds over time; Process model illustrates temporal aspects; Data tables organized temporally. | Ethnographic/ Interviews/ Archival | Show data as part of ongoing events; Richness of changing or stable context is highlighted. | Degree of richness portrayed depends on type and quality of data. | Lawrence (2017)<br>Wright & Zammuto (2013) |
| **Long Data Excerpts** | Large text segments showing conversational exchanges structure text. | Interview/ Ethnographic | Provides rich description of exchanges; Reveals 'back and forth' between people rather than single voice. | Lengthy data segments take space, reduce total number of segments; Difficult to show systematic analysis. | Jarzabkowski & Lee (2017)<br>Llewellyn & Burrow (2008) |
| **Anthropological** | Overall research context emphasized in text; provides comprehensive understanding of phenomena of interest. | Ethnographic | Provides description/ analysis of overall story; Richness of context can be portrayed. | Difficult to assess systematic nature of analysis; Requires trust in the story-teller. Difficult to fit manuscript to journals' allowed length. | Bechky (2006)<br>Zilber (2002) |