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Editorial Essay: The Tumult over Transparency: Decoupling Transparency from Replication in Establishing Trustworthy Qualitative Research*

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Abstract

Management journals are currently responding to challenges raised by the ''replication crisis'' in experimental social psychology, leading to new standards for transparency. These approaches are spilling over to qualitative research in unhelpful and potentially even dangerous ways. Advocates for transparency in qualitative research mistakenly couple it with replication. Tying transparency tightly to replication is deeply troublesome for qualitative research, where replication misses the point of what the work seeks to accomplish. We suggest that transparency advocates conflate replication with trustworthiness. We challenge this conflation on both ontological and methodological grounds, and we offer alternatives for how to (and how not to) think about trustworthiness in qualitative research. Management journals need to tackle the core issues raised by this tumult over transparency by identifying solutions for enhanced trustworthiness that recognize the unique strengths and considerations of different methodological approaches in our field.

Keywords: qualitative methods, transparency, replication, inductive research, trustworthiness of methods

As gatekeepers for our field, management journals are currently embroiled in responding to challenges raised by the ''replication crisis'' in experimental social psychology (Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn, 2011; Goldfarb and King, 2016; O'Boyle, Banks, and Gonzalez-Mulé, 2017). As scholars across the

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disciplines increasingly recognize that a sizable portion of published quantitative findings has been based on questionable research practices (John, Loewenstein, and Prelec, 2012), the legitimacy of the quantitative research enterprise is coming under threat (Anderson, Wennberg, and McMullen, 2019). In response, social psychology and other disciplines have started implementing standards for increased transparency—such as open-science practices for public sharing of materials and data—in an attempt to reduce the number of publications based on poor or even unethical practices (Open Science Collaboration, 2015).[1] The logic goes something like this: to be trustworthy, research must be replicable; and to better ensure replicability, researchers need to be more transparent about their data and methods. Therefore, practices that increase methodological transparency and thereby increase the replicability of one's research are essential for trustworthiness. But does this logic hold for all research?

We worry that approaches that link transparency to replication in the pursuit of trustworthiness are spilling over to qualitative research in unhelpful and potentially even dangerous ways (e.g., Aguinis, Cascio, and Ramani, 2017; Aguinis, Ramani, and Alabduljader, 2018; Aguinis, Hill, and Bailey, 2019; Aguinis and Solarino, 2019; Bamberger, 2019). By qualitative research, we mean inductive or abductive scholarship that does not test theory and that "produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 10).[2] This comprises a range of methods including but not limited to ethnography, grounded theory, and narrative analysis (see Bansal, Smith, and Vaara, 2018). By trustworthiness, we mean the degree to which the reader can assess whether the researchers have been honest in how the research has been carried out and reasonable in the conclusions they make. In a qualitative context, management scholars should be extremely cautious in advocating for the same forms of transparency and replicability that apply in quantitative research.

Solutions to improve research practices in the quantitative, positivist, and deductive theory-testing side of our field are important and laudable. But in the attempt to promote transparency and replicability, solutions such as open-science practices are more easily and appropriately executed for deductive research in base disciplines that share common methods, epistemologies, and ontological assumptions. There is danger in inappropriately importing the logics developed largely in experimental social psychology to the field-based, qualitative, and theory-generating side of our field. Qualitative research serves a powerful role in the creation of knowledge in management scholarship (see Bartunek, Rynes, and Ireland, 2006; Bansal and Corley, 2011). Although qualitative studies still lag behind quantitative papers in terms of submission and publication rates in top management journals, they are overrepresented in high-impact and award-winning articles.[3] For example, nearly half the

[1] See, for example, the American Economic Association's "Data and Code Availability Policy,"https://www.aeaweb.org/journals/policies/data-code/, accessed 8/5/19.

[2] Deductive qualitative research is possible, as is inductive quantitative research, but such research is rarely seen in management journals and is not the focus of our discussion here.

[3] Using "qualitative" as a keyword suggests that in recent years, nearly 25% of submissions to the *Administrative Science Quarterly* are qualitative. The *Academy of Management Journal* reports that papers based solely on qualitative data represent 11% of published papers (Bansal and Corley, 2011).

winners of the *ASQ* Award for Scholarly Contribution since 2004 are qualitative articles.[4]

The inappropriate transfer of quantitative logics to qualitative research potentially puts in jeopardy a great deal of important work. This transfer imposes burdens on researchers that are liable to skew the field's development in favor of quantitative methods, with repercussions for the choice of research projects by doctoral students and the early careers of emerging scholars. Attempts to ensure trustworthy results by establishing a single set of ''gold standard'' practices that are inappropriate for or even harmful to qualitative methods could conceivably result in a two-tier system in terms of what good research in our field looks like. Thus incorporating logics from quantitative research into qualitative research has political as well as methodological implications for the field. Any parallel effort to increase trustworthiness in qualitative research requires careful consideration of the diversity of approaches in our interdisciplinary field.

Given that most management scholars employ deductive and quantitative methods, the issues we raise could stem from common misunderstandings about the types of claims made by qualitative research. Scholars may be consuming qualitative work in ways that were never intended (e.g., as containing findings that are roughly equivalent to theory testing). These misunderstandings may tempt deductive scholars to critique the practices of qualitative researchers from their own epistemological lens, which will shape their normative views about best research practices. Yet trying to make qualitative research fit the assumptions of deductive positivism could hinder theory building and elaboration, thus undermining the key strengths of inductive, qualitative methodologies. In this essay we clarify how qualitative research in management should be understood, especially as it relates to ensuring trustworthy research. We do so by querying the often unquestioned assumption that in the pursuit of trustworthy research, replication is essential and transparency is the means of making that possible.

We argue that editors of management journals, as well as scholars who are alarmed by the replication crisis, ultimately want to publish research they can trust. With regard to empirical research, this means having confidence that the data and methods used in a paper are trustworthy. One means of assessing trustworthy research is via the transparency of its authors. Another way is the ability to replicate that research in another setting. The latter makes sense for experimental or survey studies, but tying transparency to a desire for replication so tightly in the pursuit of trustworthiness is deeply troublesome for qualitative research, where replication misses the point of what the work seeks to accomplish (i.e., theory building and elaboration rather than theory testing). Scholars require very different solutions when considering the various research ontologies and methodologies on which qualitative research is based. Management journals therefore need to tackle the core issues raised by this replication crisis by identifying solutions for enhanced trustworthiness that recognize the unique strengths and considerations of different methodological approaches in our field.

[4] The *ASQ* Award for Scholarly Contribution recognizes articles that have had the greatest scholarly impact five years after publication; see https://journals.sagepub.com/topic/collections-asq/asq-2-asq_award_for_scholarly_contribution_winners/asq.

TYING REPLICATION TO TRANSPARENCY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: TWO KEY PROBLEMS

Tying calls for methodological transparency to issues of replicability is based on the assumption that low transparency causes distrust. This is because a lack of full transparency hinders other scholars' ability to confirm that the claims made are in fact true by replicating the study (i.e., conducting the same study but with a new sample/dataset) or by attempting to reproduce identical findings using the same data and procedures as the initial study (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010; Goodman, Fanelli, and Ioannidis, 2016). But does linking methodological transparency to these forms of replication for inductive, qualitative management studies make sense? The answer is an unequivocal no: replication does not make sense for qualitative, inductive studies, and open-science solutions are not feasible or appropriate for the majority of this work.

Problem #1: Linking Transparency to Replication in Inductive Qualitative Research Is Problematic Ontologically

Many calls for transparency in service of replication either make little differentiation between qualitative and quantitative research or explicitly include qualitative research in their rubric (e.g., Aguinis and Solarino, 2019). But there is considerable methodological diversity of qualitative methods (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Cunliffe, 2011), most of which would reject the need for replication or reproduction on ontological grounds. Perhaps as an attempt to sidestep this critical point, recent calls for linking replication and transparency in qualitative research include one proviso: some sort of realist ontological stance on the part of the qualitative methodologist. In one recent example, Aguinis and Solarino (2019) attempted to use a transcendental realism perspective as a way to bridge stark ontological differences between the positivist assumptions of many quantitative studies and the interpretivism underlying much qualitative research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Tsang and Kwan, 1999). Here, realism is held to imply that while there is scope for interpretive difference, ultimately there is some objective reality that can be discovered and described in terms of law-like regularities.

From this standpoint, the process of building knowledge by investigating such regularities can encompass both initial interpretive investigation and then, through deductive examination, confirmatory testing, extension, and replication. When building knowledge in this way, methodological transparency is essential to the accumulation of knowledge through deductive testing and replication. In this view, knowledge progresses steadily upward, as one brick of knowledge is placed upon another. Knowledge accumulates vertically, building higher and higher on tested foundations.

The degree to which scholars hew to the assumptions of realism varies, however. Qualitative researchers sometimes subscribe to this vertical view by engaging in case studies that can then be translated into variables for testing through deductive, typically quantitative methods (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Quantitative confirmation helps secure each additional brick of knowledge. Although transparency is indeed required for adequate translation from theoretical constructs to quantitative variables, even here there is no

expectation that every interpretive step of individual case analysis can be perfectly replicated.

A stricter version of the vertical accumulation of knowledge embedded in recent calls for greater transparency insists on exact replication to guarantee the trustworthiness of earlier studies and to test the contextual boundaries of their validity. Exact replication depends on full transparency, so that failure in replication cannot be dismissed because of methodological discrepancies. Thus ''reproducibility is at the heart of the scientific enterprise'' (Miller and Bamberger, 2016: 313); replicability is ''the hallmark for establishing scientific truth'' (Anderson, Wennberg, and McMullen, 2019); and ''a key goal is to produce replicable and cumulative knowledge. . . . If replication is a desirable goal, then transparency is a required step'' (Aguinis and Solarino, 2019: 1).[5]

But appealing to transcendental realism as grounds for replication of qualitative work (Aguinis and Solarino, 2019) demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of this ontological view. A core principle of transcendental realism is that the world comprises open systems, subject to continuous change and characterized by complex contingencies (Bhaskar, 1979, 1997). Replication is a vain enterprise from a realist perspective: ''Progress in terms of cumulative knowledge is unlikely to come from replication . . . [done] in the hope of producing universally applicable findings in terms of empirical regularities between programmes and outcomes'' (Sayer, 1999: 23). In the transcendental realist world of open, fluid, and complex systems, exact replications would not be acclaimed as contributions to cumulative knowledge; they would be anomalies needing to be explained. From this view, replication would, or should, evoke skepticism rather than confidence.

Transcendental realism (Bhaskar, 1979, 1997) implies a very different view of knowledge accumulation than that portrayed by Aguinis and Solarino (2019) and even Miles and Huberman (1994) before them. Through this lens, the foundations of vertical knowledge accumulation, where one replicable brick is placed upon another replicable brick, become very insecure. Instead of assuming that reliable truths exist that can be confirmed, the ground is seen as always moving underneath the knowledge claims made in any earlier moment. Thus trusting in some law-like formula is liable to be rather dangerous. Realism's open systems view suggests that a horizontal notion of knowledge accumulation may be more effective as it furnishes a stock of broad principles generated across many past situations, each of them unique. In a changing, complex world, where every circumstance is different, safety lies in doubting previous experience and having available wide repertoires of tentative theories and concepts with which to address always-novel conditions.

When actors can never know in advance what knowledge they will need, then the larger the set of plausible guides, the better. On the principles of pragmatism (Rorty, 1979; Baert, 2004), actors can pick some kind of theory or concept and examine it not against the criterion of absolute knowledge but according to whether it works in the here and now. If it does not fit, then researchers simply try another one. The horizontal arrangement of knowledge

[5] See Collins (1982) for an alternative critique of replication, noting that reward structures and issues of knowledge transfer make true replication unlikely.

implies much less interdependence of accumulated knowledge. In the case of failure (i.e., when a theory or concept does not explain the phenomenon being investigated), no piles of knowledge need come tumbling down; the failed scraps of knowledge simply await circumstances in which they might have explanatory value. The point of transparency from this view is not exact replication. Rather, transparency as advocated by realist perspectives helps scholars recognize circumstances that are roughly analogous to those in which earlier theories and concepts seemed to have explanatory value.

Realism's open-systems world is particularly suitable for management research, whose aim is generally to change organizations for some kind of ''better.'' Research often attempts to help managers intervene effectively to alter problematic relationships, and for organization theorists, relationships are often unlikely to be stable enough for replication. Take, for example, theories about the relationship between diversification and performance, a central and longstanding theme in the strategic management discipline. While at one point scholars might have concluded that diversified conglomerates were suboptimal forms of organizing, these kinds of companies have performed better over time as management technologies have improved (Grant, Jammine, and Thomas, 1988; Mayer and Whittington, 2003; Schommer, Richter, and Karna, 2019). Over four decades, replicative research has discovered no fixed truths about conglomerate diversification, and in an open-systems world, it is never likely to. What qualitative research can contribute in this open-systems world is twofold: first, caution about the kinds of hard-and-fast rules that faith in regularity tends to promote; and second, rich theoretical and conceptual repertoires to help managers deal with each unique circumstance that confronts them.

Problem #2: Some Open-science Practices to Increase Transparency for Replication Purposes Are at Best Inappropriate and at Worst Harmful for Qualitative Studies

Our second concern is more practical and involves the methodological problems raised by steps to make research more transparent. In 2014, the Association for Psychological Science outlined three ''open practices'' replete with different ''badges'' authors could attain for implementing them: preregistration, publicly sharing one's protocols (e.g., survey items), and publicly sharing one's data.[6] Of these three, the first is often inappropriate, the second can be problematic, and the third is potentially unethical when considering inductive qualitative management research. Moreover, rigid application of the three badges is liable to put obstacles in the way of insightful and valuable qualitative research for which other means of assuring trustworthiness are readily available.

To start, preregistration involves having one's research design, hypotheses, and analysis plan posted and date-stamped prior to data collection and analysis so that one does not confuse prediction with postdiction: post hoc explanations (Nosek et al., 2018) or ''HARKing'' (hypothesizing after results are known) (Kerr, 1998). A significant contributor to the replication crisis came from quantitative researchers presenting postdiction findings as predictions, which violates

[6] https://www.psychologicalscience.org/publications/badges.

deductive hypothesis-testing assumptions and risks producing false-positive results. This risk is not so relevant for qualitative researchers. Because a primary goal of inductive qualitative research is to learn from informants about what is important in the context being studied, prediction is ill-advised in the first place. One should not go into inductive qualitative research with hypotheses; if researchers look only for what they are seeking, they are not doing good inductive or abductive qualitative work (Pratt and Bonaccio, 2016). Indeed, if mistrust in quantitative research comes from presenting postdiction as prediction, qualitative research would be suspect for presenting prediction as postdiction. Thus the challenges with quantitative and qualitative research are quite different, and while preregistration may be a reasonable antidote for quantitative work, it is inappropriate for qualitative studies and arguably misses the point about what qualitative research is. Importantly, this does not mean that qualitative work should simply be trusted based on what the authors say they observed or found; it also does not mean that empirical rigor is not possible with qualitative methods. As we discuss below, the rigor of qualitative research is simply evaluated according to other criteria.

With regard to publicly sharing protocols, this is already recognized to some degree as good practice in qualitative research (e.g., Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yin, 2003), and many inductive interview studies include copies of their initial interview protocols. The wrinkle here is that some inductive methodologies necessitate changing one's interview questions as the study evolves. Spradley (1979) suggested that ethnographic interviewers should begin with broad questions and then narrow to more specific ones. A similar pattern can be found in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). The logic behind this practice is that inductive researchers start out broad so that they can discover what is going on in the context they are studying. If one stays at a very general and descriptive level with interview questions, however, the data are likely to be a mile long and an inch deep.

Instead, qualitative researchers often must tweak and hone questions in the moment of data collection, following the insights as they emerge in conversation with informants. Full transparency in this case would require the researcher to share multiple interview protocols or at least indicate which questions were asked as data collection progressed (see Appendix B in Pratt, Lepisto, and Dane, 2019, as an example). Yet the ordering of questions often varies across interviews, as some informants may jump to a different topic than anticipated. Thus even if one shared every question asked during an interview, perfect openness would not lead to perfect replication in terms of the exact same data being collected. The open-systems view also cautions that even if we exactly replicated the same questions with the same people at a different point in time, we would get different responses. In short, perfect standardization in how qualitative questions are asked and in what order would make for poorer quality interviews because they could not be tailored to the reponses and insights of each interviewee. Interviewers are critically important instruments in inductive studies, and they would not be doing good research if they robotically ran through an interview protocol. In this sense, the pursuit of replication, far from enhancing the quality of research, is liable to constrain it.

Finally, sharing one's qualitative data publicly is also likely to be a damaging practice. In some circumstances, such as when the data are already publicly available via archival datasets or oral histories, it could make sense to create qualitative data repositories. But when it concerns the field data at the foundation of much qualitative management research, institutional review boards (IRBs) and similar ethics review processes often insist that the public cannot link data to particular individuals' or even organizations' identities. Although it is relatively straightforward in experimental and quantitative survey research to de-identify data, this is very difficult to accomplish in qualitative research. Simply posting one's interview notes or transcripts would most likely be deemed inappropriate by a review board, because doing so could allow members of the public, including those in power over the interviewee, to know the identity of the interviewee who might report unflattering facts. Even if researchers receive ethics board approval for such an approach, they likely would have difficulty obtaining sufficient participation when not promising confidentiality, and they could not assure the validity of what is said in the interview given increased pressures on the interviewee for social desirability.

''Scrubbing'' qualitative data such that a person is not identifiable would also mean stripping out contextual information. Yet it is the very contextualization of data that is a strength of qualitative research. If we adhere to McGrath (1981), research can accomplish generality, precision, and realism (others may refer to generalizability, accuracy, and specificity), but the dilemma is that a specific methodology cannot be strong in all three areas. To illustrate, although experimental research can tease out specific cause-and-effect relationships, the results are not high on realism. In contrast, inductive qualitative research excels at providing context-rich data. Scrubbing interview data sufficiently to ensure confidentiality would rob qualitative methods of their core strength. Arguably, well-done qualitative work necessarily includes as much showing of the data in the paper and supplementary tables as is likely to be ethically possible. Showing data that support the interpretive analysis is one way qualitative scholars establish the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This is why, as editors, we frequently find ourselves urging authors not to ''tell'' us their points but ''show'' them to us (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007).

THE WHY AND HOW (AND HOW NOT) OF METHODOLOGICAL TRANSPARENCY IN QUALITATIVE METHODS

Even if we do not believe that linking methodological transparency to replicability is prudent or typically possible for inductive qualitative scholarship, we do believe that qualitative researchers can and should be clear in describing their methods. Methodological transparency, however, needs to be decoupled from replication as the ultimate proof of whether one can trust the assertions or interpretations made by the qualitative researcher. By focusing directly on the issue of trustworthiness, our ultimate aims are similar to those unsettled by the replication crisis. If we take a more horizontal approach to building knowledge in the field, however, our concern is about the veracity of the study at

hand and the defensibility of the authors' claims based on the qualitative data they have, not whether another scholar can perfectly reproduce those claims.

Many qualitative scholars have addressed approaches to transparency and trustworthiness in qualitative methods. Yet questions about how to assess trustworthiness—and to some degree what needs to be made transparent—may differ depending on the author's ontological and epistemological assumptions about research (see Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, and Locke, 2008; Gibbert and Ruirok, 2010; Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman, 2019). Here, we briefly highlight some foundational pieces from which many subsequent methods guides have been drawn. Two sources that many interpretivist and more positivist scholars rely on, respectively, to assess trustworthiness are the pioneering work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Yin (2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) tackled the issue of trustworthiness from a naturalist paradigm and suggested several ways to help ensure the trustworthiness of one's data such as thick description and negative case inquiry. Yin (2003) discussed trustworthiness from a more positivist perspective, providing qualitative analogs to external validity, construct validity, and reliability. Other authors, while not focusing on trustworthiness per se, have nonetheless focused on what makes for good qualitative research by highlighting the qualities of specific methodologies, such as convincing ethnographic work (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997) or process studies (Langley, 1999).

These various tactics for establishing trustworthiness, and the ontological bases from which they spring, are summarized in table 1. These tactics do not form a rigid checklist to be applied to all qualitative studies; they are alternatives from which researchers should choose according to the claims they wish to make and the ontologies to which they subscribe. The criteria overlap to some degree, but nonetheless table 1 warns a researcher pursuing an ethnographic approach to pay particular attention to issues of authenticity, plausibility, and criticality (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997), and of course the ethnographer should expect editors and reviewers to be highly attentive to the same.[7] Similarly, a process researcher should follow Langley (1999) and others in being sensitive to issues of temporality and especially the dangers of retrospective reconstruction. Each approach in table 1 differs in emphasis, but all share the fundamental goal of assuring the reader that the insights can be reliably derived from the data the authors collected. As such, the purpose of this table is to point readers (and editors and reviewers) to some important sources for understanding the different ways trustworthiness may be approached when replicability is inappropriate.

Although there are differences in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research, there is general agreement about the kinds of things that need to be made transparent when conducting a trustworthy qualitative study. In particular, qualitative researchers should answer the following questions: Why was this study done? Why was this study done in this particular context? What is the author studying and why? And how did the author conduct the study and

[7] It is a potential source of confusion that both Yin (2003) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) do use the language of "replication," but here it is for the purpose of analytical comparison within cases in a single study as a means to develop additional insight. While the term is the same, replicability is not meant to imply reproducibility across investigators, replication across different versions of the same study, or a means of ensuring that one's results are objectively true.

Table 1. Means of Establishing Trustworthy or Good Qualitative Research

Position (and key source)	Characteristic	Defining questions	Illustrative practices
Naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)	Credibility	To what degree has the investigator given voice to the different constructions of reality found in one's data? Credibility is assessed by those one has studied.	"Prolonged engagement" (p. 301); "persistent observation" (p. 304); triangulation (e.g., different data sources, methods, investigators, etc.); "peer debriefing" (p. 308); "negative case analysis" (p. 309); "referential adequacy" (p. 313); "member checks" (p. 314)
	Transferability	Is there contextual similarity between the context one is studying and other contexts? The burden of proof for such a comparison lies with those who want to compare findings to other contexts more than with the original investigator.	Providing a lot of details (e.g., thick description) to "show" not "tell" the reader the findings
	Dependability	Has the investigator taken into account "both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change"? (p. 299)	All the practices of credibility plus "stepwise replication" within the dataset (p. 317) and "inquiry audit" (p. 317)
	Confirmability	Was there a process for verifying the data? Confirmability is a characteristic of the data, not the investigator.	Inquiry audit; triangulation; "reflexive journal" (p. 319); "audit trail" (p. 319); "audit process" (p. 320)
Case studies / positivism (Yin, 2003)	Construct validity	Are your measures operationalizing your concepts correctly?	"Use multiple sources of evidence; establish a chain of evidence; have key informants review draft" (p. 34)
	Internal validity	Is there a causal relationship between variables or constructs?	"Do pattern-matching; do explanation-building; address rival explanations; use logic models" (p. 34)
	External validity	Can findings be generalized and to what domain?	"Use theory in single-case studies; use replication logic in multiple case studies" (p. 34)
	Reliability	Can it be replicated across cases in the study?	"Use case study protocol; develop case study database" (p. 34)
Ethnography (Locke and Golden-Biddle, 1997)*	Authenticity	Communicating that the author was in the field and did not do violence to the experience of the informants	"Particularizing everyday life" (p. 601); "delineating the relationship in the field" (p. 603); "depicting the disciplined pursuit and analysis of data" (p. 604); "qualifying personal biases" (p. 605)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Position (and key source)	Characteristic	Defining questions	Illustrative practices
	Plausibility	Does the academic audience ''buy'' it in that it (a) makes sense and (b) makes a contribution? (p. 600)	''Normalizing unorthodox methodologies'' (p. 605); ''drafting the reader'' (p. 606); ''legitimizing the atypical'' (p. 606); ''smoothing the contestable'' (p. 608); ''differentiating findings—a singular contribution'' (p. 609); ''building dramatic anticipation'' (p. 610)
	Criticality	Does the study make the author rethink assumptions about the field or their own work?	''Carving out room to reflect'' (p. 610); ''provoking the recognition and examination of differences'' (p. 610); ''imagining new possibilities'' (p. 611)
Process research (Langley, 1999; Gehman et al., 2018)†	Longitudinal data	Has the author studied things over time?	Showing that the data fit with the time span of the examined process; interviewing people about facts or events if asking them to be retrospective or, if interviewing them in real time, trying to understand how their interpretation of events evolves; using one or a combination of different analytical strategies: narrative, quantification; attending to risk of retrospective reconstruction

* It is important to note that these authors are arguing why ethnographic work is convincing, not trustworthy. We include their arguments here as they are about what makes for good qualitative research.

† Langley does not use the term ''trustworthiness'' in her descriptions but does lay out the fundamentals of process research.

analyze the data? (Pratt, 2008: 503)[8] In answering such questions, qualitative researchers reveal critical information about their study design, sampling, data collection, and analytical practices—each of which may follow from their ontological perspective. Here, transparency means telling the reader not just what one did but why and to what effect. As Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, and Locke (2008: 423–424) warned:

> [I]n the ''Method'' sections of published articles, we often see an emphasis on quantity of data collected rather than on proximity to the life worlds of those studied. Statements emphasize researcher objectivity and independence from the phenomena they are studying rather than indicate how closely engaged they were with the social setting and its members to understand their perspectives, and research

[8] See also Creswell (1998, 2003) and Glaser and Strauss (2017) on clearly identifying how one chose one's context, the logic of one's sample design, one's analysis strategy, and why one stopped collecting data.

> procedures are presented as a linear rather than an open-ended, iterative, and contingent process. Presenting these cues in accounts of the research process not only invites inconsistent readings and evaluations of the work, but they also misrepresent key quality-making practices.

In short, qualitative researchers—regardless of method, epistemology, or ontological view—should be clear about what they did and the analytic choices they have made. The degree of transparency here is not set by the demands for replication but is more broadly set by the degree to which authors can convince the reader that they have been honest in how their research has been carried out and reasonable in the conclusions they make.

What Should Journals Do about the Tumult over Transparency?

Journals are central gatekeepers to the field and, of course, have the responsibility to keep poorly conducted research from being published. For any type of research—quantitative or qualitative—even the most cutting-edge open-science practices cannot stop unethical people from lying, falsifying data, misrepresenting results, and the like. Yet there are measures that journal editors should take in assessing the appropriate methodological transparency and trustworthiness of qualitative data.

To start, journals must have the expertise on hand to be able to judge the veracity of research done by authors using different methodologies and from different ontological perspectives. This expertise is often evident in the quality of its editors and review board members (Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, and Locke, 2008; Pratt and Bonaccio, 2016). Most leading management journals have a number of qualitative editors on their rosters. Some journals may have a deep bench of reviewers who are experts in a variety of qualitative methods. Others, like *ASQ*, may also have method experts whose purpose is to fill in methodological knowledge gaps. Although it's unlikely that a given journal will have the breadth of expertise to handle every qualitative method, pursuing such breadth is crucial.

This pursuit can also help prevent the application of overly narrow or simplistic standards for transparency and trustworthiness in the form of qualitative methodological templates. There has recently been an outcry that journals are becoming too enamored with the use of such templates in qualitative research (e.g., Langley and Abdallah, 2011; Bansal, Smith, and Vaara, 2018; Gehman et al., 2018; Reay et al., 2020). As a case in point, in a push for transparency, many reviewers and editors who are less experienced with qualitative methods pressure qualitative researchers to present their "data structure"—by which they mean first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions—regardless of whether such a structure fits the goals of the study at hand. This type of data presentation is central to the grounded-theory-inspired "Gioia method" (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012), and although it is useful in some qualitative studies, it is not appropriate for all. Moreover, not all data structures need be alike. Kaplan and Orlikowski (2013), pressed by reviewers to show their first-order/second-order data structure, offered an alternative to the Gioia approach in their appendix, showing how their analysis unfolded over five major rounds of coding and three substantial iterations with the literature along the way.

Establishing trustworthiness cannot be reduced to using a one-size-fits-all qualitative template. As noted in table 1, how one illustrates trustworthiness will depend, at least in part, on one's general approach to research, such as naturalistic inquiry or positivism. It will also depend on the specific methodology being used, such as whether one is doing an ethnography or a process study. Less-confident authors, anticipating standardized responses from editors and reviewers, often include a table in their papers representing evidence in the form of first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregate dimensions. This template approach to establishing trustworthiness is problematic because it does not acknowledge the wide range of approaches to analysis in qualitative research, which depend on the type of data, the research design, and the theories being developed (see Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman, 2019).

Templates are even problematic when used within a single methodological approach. Conducting qualitative comparative case studies provides a good example. The most common way to do these studies has been set out by Eisenhardt and her colleagues (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Langley and Abdallah (2011) have suggested that this approach to case methodology is so common that it has taken on template status. Here, researchers select some number of cases (usually about eight) for their variation along key explanatory variables of interest. Data collection often involves interviews and archival sources. Detailed comparisons across the cases then establish that this variation is associated with different organizational outcomes.

However, a very different sort of case comparison, which can be equally trustworthy, is exemplified by Kellogg's (2009, 2012) work in which the researcher selects two organizations that appear to be similar along the dimensions identified by previous scholarship in the theoretical domain of interest. The data collection is ethnographic. The analytical comparison of the dynamics and practices within each case reveals that despite the similarities, outcomes are quite different, which then leads to the identification of new constructs and mechanisms that had previously been neglected in the literature. Other forms of case comparison occur at more micro units of analysis such as projects (Obstfeld, 2012), events (Huising, 2014), individuals (Ibarra, 1999), or decisions (Kaplan, 2008). The key across all of these different units of analysis is to use variation within cases for analytical comparisons (Vaughan, 2009; Bechky, 2011).

It is also important to note that even when using a methods template, authors are still required to provide information about the methodological choices made. Pratt, Sonenshein, and Feldman (2019) suggested that one unintended effect of the use of templates among inexperienced researchers is that they often fail to be transparent about the critical, study-specific methodological choices they have made. They assume that if they follow the methodological template, they have communicated all they need to say. Given the vagaries of field research, however, it is unlikely that any project will neatly confine itself to a given template. Thus proper editorial and reviewer expertise is essential for recognizing when important methodological details are missing.

In balancing the different ways to communicate methodological transparency—as well as the motivations for transparency (e.g., legitimacy of research versus ability to replicate)—journal editors and reviewers need to think carefully about the standards they require. If they hold one standard, such as that exemplified by open-science practices, as ''the'' standard for assessing

the trustworthiness of all research, then we risk creating a two-tiered system of evaluation. We therefore encourage journal editors and reviewers to look at transparency broadly, as a means of establishing trustworthiness, and to adopt standards that are applicable to a wide range of management research, not just deductive, quantitative research in the positivist paradigm. Journals should help ensure the trustworthiness of the studies they publish, but achieving this end solely through replication is too narrow. Replication is only one reason to be transparent and only one way of establishing trustworthiness.

Conclusion

The current effort to tie replication to transparency in qualitative research could undo much good that qualitative researchers of various stripes have done to establish the validity of a wide range of qualitative methods; this range was demonstrated even in 1998 by Van Maanen's review of the qualitative research published in *ASQ*. Misapplication of the lessons learned from the replication crisis in experimental social psychology—should it influence editors, reviewers, or authors—could undermine the core strengths of qualitative methods. By extension, it could also undermine the important movement toward improved research practices in management if some scholars are inappropriately held to practices that are not applicable to their methods and ontological views. Important qualitative research might be precluded by the inflexible imposition of rigid criteria, templates, or ''badges.''

As we've argued, transparency of the kind that is useful in quantitative studies—that is, transparency for the sake of replicability—is often not useful or appropriate for qualitative research and is not the same as trustworthy research. Qualitative research subscribes to a different version of (methodological) transparency that often stems from the goal of horizontal rather than vertical knowledge accumulation. At a fundamental level, qualitative research has as its basis trust and confidentiality, which is an uncomfortable fit with the distrust and desire for control that is the basis of the transparency movement (Moors, 2019).

We encourage reviewers and editors less familiar with qualitative research to approach these papers with curiosity about what can be learned from in-depth views into organizations, teams, projects, interactions, and individuals. We believe journals, by applying appropriate standards of methodological transparency for qualitative research, can contribute to enhanced horizontal knowledge accumulation in management. Qualitative research is a field of a thousand flowers blooming (Van Maanen, 1995: 133), each with its own ontological stance and epistemology. Attempts to prune or discard these flowers reflect a naïve view of how social science actually works and have political implications for the future of our field.

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