
QUALPOR NEWS

September 2020

Welcome to QUALPOR!



*Margaret R. Roller MA,
QUALPOR Chair*

QUALPOR is an AAPOR affinity group intended for any AAPOR member who is managing, conducting, or has an interest in qualitative research methods. QUALPOR was approved by AAPOR council in 2018 and held its first meeting in 2019. QUALPOR currently has 89 members and continues to grow! If you are not already a member, become a member by contacting Margaret Roller (rmr@rollerresearch.com) or Paul Lavrakas (pjlavrakas@comcast.net).



*Paul J. Lavrakas PhD,
QUALPOR Co-chair*

The purpose of this group is to advance the discipline of qualitative research within AAPOR by offering a forum in which AAPOR members can share best practices, exchange resources, and discuss new approaches to qualitative research design. We do this by holding member meetings and providing networking opportunities, coordinating qualitative research paper sessions at the AAPOR conferences, and encouraging member engagement in areas of mutual interest.

QUALPOR Brings the First-ever Qualitative Tracks to AAPOR

The 2019 AAPOR conference in Toronto included the first-ever qualitative research track, including five consecutive paper sessions with four to five presenters per panel. These sessions were well attended & the overall enthusiasm for this initiative was extremely high. You can access a list of the papers presented in each session of the 2019 track as well as links to the presenters' presentation files by clicking [here](#).

The enthusiasm for the 2019 qualitative track extended into 2020. The response to the 2020 Call for Abstracts was overwhelming, with 40 abstracts submitted for consideration resulting, initially, in a six-session track that was accepted for the AAPOR 2020 conference. When the conference went virtual, the qualitative track was re-configured into three panel

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sessions, including a session on mixed methods and alternative solutions, qualitative data analysis, and cognitive interviewing. You can access a list of the papers presented in each session of the 2020 track as well as links to the presenters' presentation files by clicking [here](#).

If you have an idea for a qualitative session for the 2021 AAPOR conference, or a particular paper you would like to present, it is not too early to send your ideas to Margaret Roller (rmr@rollerresearch.com) or Paul Lavrakas (pjlavrakas@comcast.net).

QUALPOR Members Present September AAPOR Webinar

QUALPOR members Mariel McKone Leonard, Darby Steiger, and Karen Kellard will be presenting "Conducting Sensitive Interviews: Caring for Research Participants and Interviewers" on **September 10, 2020** as part of the [AAPOR webinar series](#). These researchers are incredibly involved in this topic area and their webinar should prove to be of great interest to anyone working on sensitive subject matter. To get a taste, check out [Darby's presentation at the 2020 AAPOR Virtual Conference](#).

The AAPOR webinar series offers a great opportunity for QUALPOR members to become involved in AAPOR activities while furthering the knowledge of qualitative methods to the broader AAPOR membership. You can learn more about AAPOR webinars at the AAPOR website or contact Rachel Caspar, Education Chair at caspar@rti.org.



Research Interest Groups Come Together in QUALPOR

Several QUALPOR members have expressed interest in specific qualitative research areas and are at the beginning stages of exploring ways forward. The Leonard, Steiger, and Kellard webinar mentioned above touches on one such special interest group with the focus on vicarious trauma and emotional harm. David Harris is studying, what the academic community calls, the interdependence of affect and cognition, with a focus on its implications for qualitative inquiry. Amber Ott's area of interest is qualitative best practices and standards. And Kinsey Gimbel has formed a working group to explore OMB limits on incentives used in qualitative research. Anyone interested in joining one or more of these groups can contact Mariel Leonard at m.mckone.leonard@gmail.com, David Harris at david@imresearch.org, Amber Ott at amber@hudsonpacific.co, and/or Kinsey Gimbel at kgimbel@anr.com.

New! Book Club for Qualitative Researchers

By David F. Harris



Let's start a book club for qualitative researchers. We might begin by nominating key books that have or should influence how we think about our work as qualitative researchers. I have a few on my list, including "Thinking, Fast and Slow," by Daniel Kahneman. Think of books that might directly or indirectly influence how we think about and practice our discipline. What if we collected a list and then voted on which books to tackle first? This book club would let us read these influential books and discuss with one another how these works have changed how we approach our work. It would be a nice way to bring deep thinking and practical application to our days. I could also imagine write ups about these books for AAPOR. If you are interested, please contact me at david@imresearch.org.

Public Opinion Quarterly's Invitation to Qualitative Researchers

By Allyson L. Holbrook & Eric Plutzer, Editors in chief

Public Opinion Quarterly's mission is to publish the finest scholarship on public opinion; elections, voting and political participation; social and civic communications; and the scholarly methods that are used to study these phenomena. We reject the premise that public opinion research implies the use of public opinion polls. Rather, we welcome all evidence-based research that illuminates attitudes, behaviors, values, and policy preferences of citizens worldwide.

That being said, it is safe to say that most manuscript submissions and most published articles utilize the methods of sample surveys, forced-choice questionnaires, and other techniques in the survey methodologist's toolkit.

As incoming editors of *POQ*, we have been asked to write a short and practical invitation to those conducting qualitative research who might seek to publish that work in the pages of *POQ*. We are delighted to do so. Our advice falls into two broad categories: First we discuss general criteria that we apply to all manuscript submissions, and we then discuss how these apply specifically to some of the more common kinds of qualitative methods.

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- *Make a major contribution.* As the flagship journal of AAPOR we can afford to be picky. We receive many submissions that reflect competent research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. But we can only publish a fraction of those and we give preference to papers that make a strong case that their contribution is “important” in some way. There are almost as many ways to demonstrate importance as there are published articles. This includes resolving major debates regarding theory, advancing new methods that will be useful to applied researchers, utilizing a creative research design to shed new light on contemporary or historical politics or social change, and so on. In some way, most POQ articles alter the research agenda of others, or provide new and useful infrastructure (e.g., in data or methods). For any article, we can ask three questions:
 - What have I learned that I did not know before?
 - Is that new knowledge important?
 - How confident am I that the new knowledge is justified by the evidence, procedures, methods, and interpretations of the authors?

It is this last question that may place a burden on qualitative scholars. Many of the quality criteria frequently invoked in POQ submissions – comparing sample demographics to census data, demonstrating reliability and validity of additive scales, reporting standard regression diagnostics – do not have exact equivalents in qualitative research.

Nevertheless, many of the same general principles apply. Qualitative researchers who address these principles explicitly will be able to make a strong case for their *POQ* submission.

- *Be clear about the correspondence of measures and theoretical constructs.* If in-depth interviews are intended to reveal aspects of resentment, alienation, racism, or other attitudinal constructs, be sure to illuminate the facets of these constructs independently of the data at hand. Provide the kinds of evidence that would convince a neutral reader that your measures and conclusions are true to the theoretical and operational definitions of a construct that are common in the literature.
- *Be clear about scope conditions.* Often a case study must be restricted to a specific time or place. Do not simply say that there is no intention to generalize. In the same way that survey researchers think about selection bias or coverage bias, engage the reader in a discussion of exactly how the results might be expected to differ in different kinds of settings.

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- *Be transparent in methods.* The [AAPOR Code](#) requires certain specific disclosures for qualitative research, including copies of interview schedules, coding protocols, field dates and recruitment procedures if relevant, and so on. *POQ* has additional requirements regarding the availability of data such as transcripts. You can read our policy [here](#) and some background about the policy in this [editorial](#). But the crucial principles can be stated more briefly:
 - Research procedures should be described in sufficient step-by-step detail that another scholar could carry out the same project in another place or another time and be confident that they did not introduce differences that would undermine the ability to compare results.
 - Intermediate products, such as interview transcripts should be available to all readers and researchers so that they can re-analyze them to see if they come to the same conclusions.

For both quantitative and qualitative researchers alike, the new emerging norms of transparency and replicability can seem like a burden. Can I find all my field notes? Can I reconstruct the exact process by which inter-coder agreements were reconciled? Do I have a list of participants who dropped out early in the study? Do I have notes from the interviewer training session I conducted? Ideally, all projects will anticipate the need for such documents and integrate their creation and retention into the normal workflow. We understand that these expectations may be new to many and seem like unreasonable expectations. But we are convinced that the integrity of our work, the esteem of our journal, and the standing of our researchers as experts depends on making transparency and replicability expected parts of how we conduct research.

QUALPOR: AAPORnet Convention

A topic of discussion in our QUALPOR member meetings earlier this year was the idea of a QUALPOR forum where members can share information and thoughts regarding qualitative research. After much discussion as to whether this forum should be a standalone channel (QUALPORnet) or integrated with AAPORnet, it became clear that members preferred the latter. To this end, QUALPOR has adopted a new convention for discussing qualitative matters on AAPORnet; that is, by beginning the message subject line with "QUALPOR:" followed by the subject title. So please, to help gain the attention of QUALPOR members as well as anyone interested in qualitative methods, consider using this convention when posting qualitative research content on AAPORnet.

Confessions of a Quantitative Methods Snob

By Mary Losch



Thinking about my respect for qualitative methods these days, I must confess that I have not always been so positive. I have evolved a good bit over the years. Some of the shift came about as I moved away from research driven by theory in my graduate school days to more applied designs over the ensuing decades. But my significant bias against qualitative designs stayed intact for many years. Even in an applied setting, I was not convinced that conversations with a few folks not selected at random could add value when what we really needed was to generalize to broader populations. Little did I know.

As is true for many in the survey world, I danced around the edges of qualitative work as we would sometimes include cognitive interviewing as part of our survey pilot testing. A necessary exception that proved useful. We then began using an occasional focus group now and then to help interpret a finding or clarify a direction or concept as we developed a questionnaire. As we began to get client requests for focus groups in addition to surveys, I decided we should probably establish the same guidelines for these methods as we do for our survey and analysis methods – rigor. So, about a decade ago, we began requiring the same professional development for focus group moderation as we did for quantitative skills – that is, training and course work. We chose [RIVA Training Institute](#) (there are several excellent options). All our core research staff now receive multi-day focus group moderator training within a year of joining us. I have also tapped qualitative professionals like Margaret Roller periodically to provide additional training on qualitative approaches and the use of mixed methods in applied research.

At the University of Northern Iowa Center for Social & Behavioral Research, survey methods are part of almost all our various projects. Sometimes they manifest as full probability-based RDD or ABS surveys designed to determine point estimates; sometimes they are present as small, targeted assessments that are part of program and project evaluations designed to illuminate activity processes and participant experiences within a

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program framework. Our qualitative methods have expanded over time and we now conduct dozens of in-depth interviews annually. While the skills needed to conduct these interviews overlap with questionnaire development and data collection, an in-depth interview guide has different goals and conducting an in-depth interview is not the same as conducting a survey interview. Switching between these methods is not without what I think of as “interference” and I find that it takes a healthy amount of experience in both quantitative and qualitative methods to be able to move easily between these methods of inquiry.

Over the past few years, we added what we call SMS (text message) “quick capture” measures that we also place more in the qualitative than the quantitative methods space. These are typically 2-3 brief questions that are asked via text to small numbers of individuals. We use these to do a quick assessment of immediate reactions to an event, training, lecture, etc. This has helped us understand immediate reactions that are often lost before we can send and receive responses to longer surveys. We have also begun to think about how to incorporate other qualitative methods such as photovoice (AKA autophotography; participatory photography; photo-elicitation). This method allows participants to capture visual representations in photos (and sometimes associated captions or journals) that provide insights into previously invisible dimensions of participants’ experiences, perceptions, and perspectives. We have found this to be challenging in some contexts but believe it does offer promise as another important methods tool in the applied research world. Still novices, we look forward to gaining expertise in the use of this method.

For me, the toolbox is how I have come to view the value and power of utilizing various methods. I have shifted from viewing qualitative methods with a singular focus on their limitations to a focus on their unique strengths; I now see them as important methods in a portfolio of tools. And I also see the limitations of purely quantitative methods like surveys. Quantitative methods do not do a particularly good job elucidating the “how” and “why” questions. However, these dimensions are very important to gaining a full understanding of most phenomena and systems. I often repeat a well-worn AAPOR mantra – fit for purpose. A quantitative snob no more, my bias now is squarely in the mixed-methods camp. By using the full range of tools, we gain both breadth and depth as we seek to answer questions and solve complex problems.

Qualitative Research in the Time of Covid-19

Since March 2020, many qualitative researchers have been scrambling to devise effective alternatives to the in-person mode. In July, QUALPOR member Jennifer Franz started a conversation on AAPORnet with the subject “Focus Group Question.” The question that Jennifer sought advice on had to do with the appropriate number of participants for online synchronous (video) groups.



The advice that Jennifer received varied greatly. Based on people’s own recent experience with video focus groups, the recommendations ranged from four or five participants (i.e., a mini group) to 8 or 10 participants (i.e., a standard in-person group size). To view this thread, along with other comments pertaining to discussion length as well as using a simultaneous interpreter, sign into the [AAPORnet archives](#), look at July 2020 “by thread,” and scroll down to the “Focus Group Question” thread.

For those of you who are working in qualitative methods and interested in exploring best practices, or at least how other researchers have effectively utilized online solutions in their qualitative research, here are a few references that may be useful. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list but rather examples to stimulate further thinking.

Email In-depth Interviews

Bowker, N., & Tuffin, K. (2004). [Using the online medium for discursive research about people with disabilities](#). *Social Science Computer Review*, 22(2), 228–241.

Egan, J., Chenoweth, L., & McAuliffe, D. (2006). [Email-facilitated qualitative interviews with traumatic brain injury survivors: A new and accessible method](#). *Brain Injury*, 20(12), 1283–1294.

Hawkins, J. E. (2018). [The Practical Utility Suitability of Email Interviews in Qualitative Research](#). *The Qualitative Report*, 23(2), 493–501.

McCoyd, J. L. M., & Kerson, T. S. (2006). [Conducting intensive interviews using email: A serendipitous comparative opportunity](#). *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(3), 389–406.

Stacey, K., & Vincent, J. (2011). [Evaluation of an electronic interview with multimedia stimulus materials for gaining in depth responses from professionals](#). *Qualitative Research*, 11(5), 605–624.

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Asynchronous Focus Groups

Tates, K., Zwaanswijk, M., Otten, R., van Dulmen, S., Hoogerbrugge, P. M., Kamps, W. A., & Bensing, J. M. (2009). [Online focus groups as a tool to collect data in hard-to-include populations: Examples from paediatric oncology](#). *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 9(1), 15.

Harmsen, I. A., Mollema, L., Ruiters, R. A., Paulussen, T. G., de Melker, H. E., & Kok, G. (2013). [Why parents refuse childhood vaccination: a qualitative study using online focus groups](#). *BMC Public Health*, 13, 1183.

Synchronous Video Focus Groups & In-depth Interviews

Forrestal, S. G., D'Angelo, A. V., & Vogel, L. K. (2015). [Considerations for and lessons learned from online, synchronous focus groups](#). *Survey Practice*, 8(2), 1-8.

Janghorban, R., Roudsari, R. L., & Taghipour, A. (2014). [Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research](#). *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v9.24152>

Lobe, B. (2017). [Best Practices for Synchronous Online Focus Groups](#). In *A New Era in Focus Group Research* (pp. 227-250). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Asynchronous & Synchronous Focus Groups

Stewart, K., & Williams, M. (2005). [Researching online populations: The use of online focus groups for social research](#). *Qualitative Research*, 5(4), 395-416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794105056916>



Conferences: Call for Submissions & Registration

Brady West posted a message on AAPORnet on August 21, 2020 calling for short course proposals for the AAPOR 2021 conference. He states, “We are primarily looking for introductory short courses that will provide a sound working overview of a technique or methodology with an emphasis on practical take-away skills for participants.” This looks like a great opportunity for QUALPOR members to demonstrate their skills and knowledge! You can submit a

proposal to **teach** a short course, or you can submit a proposal with an **idea** for a short course that someone else could teach. You can also do both. Please submit your proposals **no later than September 15, 2020** at this link: <https://forms.gle/Q1MHimsX3QGnz4cy5>. For more details or questions, see the post on AAPORnet and/or contact Brady at bwest@umich.edu.

Two qualitative conferences are also calling for submissions:

- [The Virtual Conference for Qualitative Inquiry](#), being held November 19-22, 2020
- [TQR 12th Annual Conference](#), being held January 12-15, 2021

You can register now for the [NVivo Virtual Conference: Qualitative Research in a Changing World](#), being held September 23, 2020.