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Reporting guidelines for qualitative research: a values-based approach

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ABSTRACT

Evaluative tools for qualitative research need to be developed and designed in a way that allows them to be used by the research community to assess qualitative research on its own terms, and thus strengthen, rather than undermine, research quality. The diversity of qualitative research practice makes the development of 'one size fits all' tools challenging. When evaluating *Big Q Qualitative* – the use of practices for generating and analysing qualitative data underpinned by qualitative research values – many existing 'one size fits all' reporting checklists and standards have the potential to introduce methodological incongruence through their inclusion of criteria that don't 'fit' or align with Big Q values. The values and practices of Big Q Qualitative research, and the paradigms and meta-theoretical assumptions that inform them, are typically incommensurable with ideas and ideals founded in, disciplinary dominant, (post)positivism/objectivism and scientific realism. The unknowing, or knowing-but-required, application of ill-fitting criteria and standards for reporting risks not just incongruence, but undermining the vitality and creativity of Big Q Qualitative. However, evaluative guidelines remain important tools, pragmatically and rhetorically. In this paper, we explain and justify our development of a set of reporting *guidelines* to support methodologically congruent and reflexively open evaluation and reporting of Big Q Qualitative research. The *Big Q Qualitative Reporting Guidelines* (*BQQRG*) articulate a values-, rather than consensus-, based framework for reporting and evaluating qualitative research.

Introduction

If a piece of research is to be evaluated, it *needs to be evaluated on its own terms*. (Finlay 2006, 325, emphasis in original)

By the quantitative measure of sheer volume, qualitative research seems to be flourishing – more and more people are doing, and reporting, qualitative

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research. But from a quality perspective, is qualitative research *flourishing*? Our take, as authors, reviewers, readers, and qualitative methodologists, is a more tempered assessment, pointing to tensions, inconsistencies and frustrations around qualitative reporting. Various reporting checklists, standards and guidelines – there are many versions of each – exist as part of a broader set of resources oriented to quality in the doing and reporting of qualitative research. These – whatever we call them, and we do think language matters – have become a key tool for determining publishability and quality practice for qualitative research. We have concerns about both checklists and standards, which has led us to develop our own set of reporting *guidelines*, the Big Q Qualitative Reporting Guidelines (BQQRG;[1] see Table 1), which we introduce and contextualise in this paper. We outline how the use (and usefulness) of the BQQRG is delimited to research conducted within what psychologists Kidder and Fine (1987) designated Big Q Qualitative (hence the name), and which we conceptualise more broadly as non-positivist research that is qualitative in its values and paradigm, data, and analytic and reporting practices (see *Methodological congruence . . .* section).

Quality and reporting checklists are controversial – rejected by some journals/ editors while being required by others. For critics, checklists are considered overly rigid and prescriptive (Barbour 2001), inhibiting of transparency (Treharne and Riggs 2015), to reduce qualitative research to a list of technical procedures (Barbour 2001; Buus and Perron 2020; LaMarre and Chamberlain 2022; Tod, Booth, and Smith 2022), to succumb to methodolatry (Sparkes and Smith 2009), and to conflate reporting quality with study quality (Shaw et al. 2019). Their 'overzealous and uncritical' use (Barbour 2001, 1115) has been critiqued, linking to the potential for criteria, when entrenched, to operate against quality (Gergen 2014). These general critiques set the scene for two concerns we have with checklists and standards, related to: 1) the methodologies for developing reporting checklists and standards; and 2) the potential for the use of reporting checklists and standards to produce what we term methodological incongruence (Buus and Agdal 2013; Morse 2021) – where elements of the research, from the micro to the macro, are not aligned. The latter is largely related to the extent to which checklists (do not) acknowledge, or maybe more importantly accommodate, the diversity within qualitative research (practice-based and conceptual), including recognising the 'incommensurability' of certain theoretical frameworks for research ((post) positivist and (various) non-positivist or interpretivist paradigms; Lincoln, Lynham, and Denzin (2024)) and the connectedness of practice(s) to such

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[1]A somewhat silly acronym seemed a necessity! We pronounce this Borg, in playful reference to the television and film Star Trek franchise. The irony of producing a set of guidelines to foster a situated, reflexive diversity of practice (under the Big Q umbrella), with a name for a species whose premise was total assimilation ('Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated') is not lost on us.

frameworks. Developing a set of *universal* markers of (reporting) quality for *all* qualitative research is arguably an impossibility (see Gergen 2014).

We use *Section A* of this paper to clearly demarcate *our* perspectives/values around qualitative research. In *Section B*, we use tensions and inconsistencies in published qualitative research to highlight what happens when different values and assumptions collide in publication expectations. We also focus on the purpose and methodology of checklists and standards, and our critique of strategies of consolidation and/or (expert) consensus on which they are often built (Munthe-Kaas et al. 2019). We use as examples the widely cited and influential Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) checklist – a 32 item checklist for reporting interview and focus group research developed by applied qualitative health care researchers (Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig 2007), and the American Psychological Association's Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Research (JARS-Qual), developed by a group of (mostly) US psychologists with interests including narrative psychology, constructivist grounded theory and mixed methods research (Levitt et al. 2018). Acknowledging the risks and dangers of attempts to codify qualitative quality, we explain why we *nonetheless* view reporting *guidelines* as making a meaningful contribution to discussions of quality in (Big Q) qualitative research. In *Section C* we introduce and describe our process for developing the BQQRG, including how our approach contrasts with the more typical reliance on consolidation and consensus. We discuss the two quality principles which informed our development of the BQQRG – methodological congruence (Pearson et al. 2015) or integrity (Levitt et al. 2017; Morrill and Rizo 2023), and reflexive openness (Jacobs et al. 2021) or transparency (e.g., Tuval-Mashiach 2017). The BQQRG is – we hope – both pragmatically and rhetorically useful, and aspirational – imagining, but also hopefully contributing to the development of, an academic psychology less hostile to and more understanding of *Big Q* Qualitative research.

Section A: qualitative horizons – situating ourselves and our understandings of the field

Any attempt to demarcate quality or reporting guidelines for qualitative research must be grounded in a clear definition of what constitutes qualitative research, and an understanding of which approaches to qualitative research the guidelines are applicable to. We argue that qualitative researchers creating reporting guidelines also need to endeavour to 'own their perspectives' (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie 1999) – position themselves, be reflexive, and strive to be *knowing* practitioners. Explicit positioning is important as it means the reader can judge the founding for, and limits of, authors' qualitative imagination and how that shaped their framing of the reporting guidelines. Drawing on Morrow (2005) and Rennie (1994), we evoke *horizons of understanding* as a way to frame such positioning work – which is not about *personal* disclosures, but instead details of training, research and

supervision experience, and research values. In this section, we reflect on our experience, and what research values we treat as 'foundational.'

We are psychologists whose research tends to explore the intersections of feminist, LGBTQIA+, and critical psychology in relation to gender, sexuality, family, embodiment and health. We received training in qualitative methods as undergraduate and postgraduate students. We have reflected on how our background has informed our development of reflexive thematic analysis (TA) and our qualitative sensibility in several interviews – in an interview with Jankowski, Braun, and Clarke (2017), we discussed how our PhD supervisors, Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson, encouraged us to be adventurers with qualitative methods, and the ways feminism and feminist methodological scholarship has informed our practice as qualitative researchers. In other interviews, we've reflected on how the rich, passionate focus on (qualitative and discursive) methodology and being surrounded by 'titans of critical psychology' during our PhDs (Coxon, Braun, and Clarke 2022, 39; see also Braun, Clarke, and Hayfield 2022) informed our development of reflexive TA and our methodological scholarship more broadly. Our critical psychology background and training has taught us to define qualitative research broadly. If we had to distil the focus of qualitative research into one word, for us it would be 'meaning'.

We are situated (mostly – see below) within western knowledge frameworks, and have (some) training in, have used ourselves, or have supervised research using, and in some instances have written about (we cite our relevant methodological scholarship/websites), the following methods and methodologies: interviews (in person, instant messenger, email, telephone and video call modalities) (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013); focus groups (in person and virtual) (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013); qualitative surveys (e.g., Braun et al. 2021; Braun, Clarke, and Gray 2017b; Terry and Braun 2017); photo-methods; drawing tasks and other (visual) creative methods; story completion (see www.storycompletion.net); vignettes (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013; Braun, Clarke, and Gray 2017a, 2017b); researcher-directed /solicited diaries (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013; Braun, Clarke, and Gray 2017a); user-generated content (online forums, Facebook comments, Instagram posts) (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013, 2022b; Braun, Clarke, and Gray 2017a); secondary sources (newspaper and magazine articles, television talk shows, Hansard, websites, literature) (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013; Braun, Clarke, and Gray 2017a); thematic analysis (see www.thematicanaly sis.net); interpretative phenomenological analysis; grounded theory; narrative analysis; discourse analysis and discursive psychology; and conversation analysis (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013, 2021b). Methods and methodologies that we have included in our teaching, but have never personally used or supervised, include ethnography, observation, field research, participatory/ action research approaches, and ethnomethodology.

In terms of theoretical approaches, we have conducted and supervised research using constructionism, poststructuralism, critical realism, contextualism, phenomenology, feminism, critical race theory, and queer theory, among others. Being situated in Aotearoa New Zealand, Ginny also engages with various Indigenous knowledge frameworks, and has (co)supervised students using elements of Kaupapa Māori and Mana Wāhine approaches (e.g., Le Grice and Braun 2018), but does not consider herself expert in these. Such approaches weave in different relational, ethical and research values for doing Big Q Qualitative research.

Ginny tends to supervise (honours, Masters and PhD) students using critical* qualitative approaches, whereas Victoria typically supervises (undergraduate, Masters, professional doctorate and PhD) students using experiential* qualitative approaches (in applied fields) (* discussed next). Some readers will no doubt note that their preferred theories, methodologies and practices of inquiry are missing from this account. There are *many* other approaches that we are aware of, or have read about, but haven't used ourselves, supervised or taught. Our knowledge of post-qualitative inquiry, autoethnography and creative analytic practices, for example, is limited. And no doubt there are many other approaches we haven't yet encountered. Qualitative research is flourishing; innovation and possibility abound (e.g., LaMarre and Chamberlain 2022).

Defining qualitative research: our mapping of the field

One thing qualitative researchers generally agree on is the diversity within qualitative research, but from there it gets more complicated. We focus here on qualitative traditions as defined, debated and practiced within Anglo/western knowledge frameworks (e.g., Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith 2008; Smith 2021), acknowledging significant regional variation (e.g., Flick 2005). There are numerous ways to 'map the terrain' of qualitative research – psychologists Madill and Gough (2008, 254) referred to qualitative research in the early 21st Century as a 'fuzzy set,' noting 'the field consists of clusters of methods with features in common that overlap, in some respects, with other clusters, while at the same time, some methods have no obvious features in common with other methods' (pp. 254–255). Sociologist Creswell's (1998) typology of five qualitative traditions/approaches – biography (latterly narrative research, Creswell 2013), phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study research – is still well cited, even though reviews from various disciplines shows that most research doesn't fit within this typology (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2017).

A distinction that we've used and developed in our own methodological writing (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2013, 2022b) is psychologist Reicher's (2000) differentiation between 'experiential' and 'discursive'/critical qualitative. He described these approaches as having 'different philosophical roots [...] different theoretical assumptions and [asking] different types of questions' (p. 4). He regarded experiential qualitative (exemplified by approaches such as grounded theory) as

politically radical but epistemologically conservative. While experiential qualitative emphasises taking seriously participants' experiences and perspectives, it shares (normative) quantitative psychology's transparent view of language (see Hall 1997) and 'factist' take on data (see Sandelowski 2011). Reicher positioned critical qualitative (exemplified by approaches such as discourse analysis and discursive psychology) as epistemologically radical, departing from both quantitative and experiential qualitative by viewing language as a form of social action.

Other typologies centre on the different paradigm(s) underpinning qualitative research. Some describe a singular qualitative paradigm within which much of the diversity can be located (Long and Godfrey 2004); others argue that 'qualitative research is not a [singular] paradigm,' and that no one set of characteristics can adequately encompass all qualitative research (Madill 2015, 214). Commonly used demarcations have included (post)positivist, interpretative, radical and poststructuralist (Grant and Giddings 2002). The latest iteration of Lincoln, Lynham, and Denzin's (2024) evolving – since 1994 (Guba and Lincoln 1994) – formulation of qualitative paradigms encompasses postpositivism, critical theory (e.g., approaches concerned with social power such as feminism and critical race theory), constructivism (or interpretivism) and participatory. Psychologist Willig (2021) differentiated between realist, phenomenological and social constructionist approaches to qualitative knowledge production.[2] But there is no definitive mapping. As Denzin and Lincoln (2018, xv) noted, 'the open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project.' What – to us – is important is recognising the particular values and assumptions embedded in an approach, and not assuming these to be universally shared.

A distinction we (and others, e.g., Willig 2021) also find useful – particularly in psychology, where objectivist assumptions often sneak in unnoticed (Kirschner et al. 2023) – and that we have developed and expanded in our own methodological scholarship, is between small q qualitative and Big Q Qualitative (Kidder and Fine 1987). Kidder and Fine (1987) defined small q as qualitative research conceptualised in proceduralist terms, as the use of qualitative *techniques* for generating and analysing data (often within mixed-methods and/or hypothetic-deductive designs). We argue that the research *values* underpinning small q qualitative research typically are not given much – explicit – consideration, and often (unknowingly) default to the disciplinary-dominant norms of (post)positivism and (scientific) realism (Walsh 2015) – sometimes described as 'mainstream

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[2]We simply note here the slippery, geographically variable, and sometimes confused use of language around constructionism and constructivism as critical/non-positivist approaches (for a deep discussion of variation and similarity across these, see Raskin 2002).

scientism' (Morrill and Rizo 2023, 410).[3] Disciplinary dominance matters not because it is (post)positivism that is dominant, but in the sense that practice aligned with the norm does not *require* robust explanation, but deviation from it does (Varpio et al. 2017). And (dominant) 'epistemologies, by their nature, are hard to see beyond' (Hunter 2002, 133). Although small q and Big Q both use qualitative techniques or practices of inquiry (Gergen 2014) (albeit often *very* differently), the approaches evidence profoundly different underlying research values. We use research values as a catch-all to convey not just axiology, but paradigms, ontology and epistemology or philosophical meta-theory. Research characterised as Big Q Qualitative comprises both qualitative techniques *and* qualitative research values (Kidder and Fine 1987). The values of a *qualitative* paradigm might include a view of knowledge as partial and situated, and researcher subjectivity as a *resource* for research, rather than a potential threat to research quality (Gough and Madill 2012). To us, Big Q Qualitative is a useful umbrella term for research that rejects, or strives to reject, objectivist assumptions, values and norms (including the often-unquestioned positivism of psychology, and other disciplines; Hunter 2002). Our approach to – and understanding of – qualitative research fits within this Big Q orientation, and it is with this perspective that we approach questions of reporting quality, and reporting checklists, standards and guidelines.

Section B: conceptually muddy fields and the challenge of reporting checklists and standards

To contextualise our discussion of the BQQRG, we first highlight inconsistency, and the ways small q often gets muddled into claimed Big Q Qualitative in the reporting of qualitative research. We situate quality and reporting checklists and standards as contributing to this problem, and highlight what we see as the inevitable (and problematic) consequences of the methodologies used for the development of (many of) these.

Qualitative reporting: a small q-big Q muddle?

Lots of published qualitative research in psychology (and beyond) seemingly unknowingly muddies together elements of Big Q with elements of small

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[3]We use (post)positivism to capture the blurring of positivism and postpositivism (Lather 1993). Postpositivists tend to reject pure or scientific realism, which Walsh (2015) frames as realism at ontological, epistemological and semantic levels, but remain foundationally realist, and concerned with objective (as possible) truth. For this reason, in places we use the term objectivist (Fryer 2022) to connote a core aspect of this epistemology. Both iterations of positivism are, in Lincoln, Lynham, and Denzin's (2024) terms 'commensurate' with each other, conceptually, but incommensurate with the various Big Q 'interpretivist' or constructionist orientations. Big Q Qualitative ontological (and epistemological) frames range from critical realist (e.g., Matthews 2014; Maxwell 2022) to relativist – although Willig (2016) has argued there's some (ontological) realism in even ostensibly non-realist (critical) qualitative research. This debate is bigger than this paper has space for, and our use of these terms is intended to convey a broad or normalised use (rather than deeper philosophical considerations).

q (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2023a, 2023b). Writing about health professions education, Varpio et al. (2017) noted that qualitative researchers used (post) positivist-friendly concepts and practices to establish the *legitimacy* of qualitative research in fields dominated by (post)positivism and objectivism; their analysis seems equally applicable to psychology (Masaryk and Stainton Rogers 2024; Morrill and Rizo 2023; cf Walsh 2015). Varpio et al. identified the use of postpositivist methodologies like Glaserian grounded theory (Glaser 1978) and rhetorical flourishes such as listing the number of transcript pages to reassure readers of the strength of the data 'despite a "small n"' (p. 41).[4] It seems that even though many qualitative researchers have moved on from (post)positivism (e.g., through using constructivist rather than positivist grounded theory; Charmaz 2014), expectations for quality often remain at least partially (and sometimes unknowingly) rooted in those (scientific realist and (post)positivist) foundationalist frameworks. Indeed, in reflecting on a decade of the APA journal *Qualitative Psychology*, Kirschner et al. (2023) noted as a challenge that:

> authors reporting on their qualitative projects sometimes import assumptions and language from quantitative methods, perhaps because these are the sole approaches in which they (like many psychologists) were trained. Problems of this type manifest in many ways and may include devaluing (and thus misunderstanding) the logic and criteria of rigor in qualitative inquiry. (p. 386)

With qualitative research entering the mainstream, (congruent) quality markers and knowing reviewers have not always caught up (e.g., Riley et al. 2019) – and certain quality measures appear to have become what Motulsky (2021, 402) characterised as 'knee jerk "should" techniques' for (assumed) quality. Varpio et al. unpacked the (post)positivist ontological and epistemological roots and implications of quality practices like member-checking (for accuracy of interpretation) (see also Motulsky 2021), data saturation, and triangulation (of data, researchers etc. for accuracy, confirmability or getting closer to a singular truth), highlighting their frequent inclusion in quality and reporting checklists and guidelines (they are included in the two reporting checklists/standards we focus on here – COREQ and JARS-Qual – although not mandated in the latter). The concerns of the small q qualitative researcher – for standardisation, accuracy, reliability – are those of the (post)positivist. They reflect, in some disciplines, dominant norms (Gaddefors and Cunningham 2024; Masaryk and Stainton Rogers 2024) that do not align with Big Q Qualitative. Neither (ideal) research practices, such as strategies for controlling researcher influence and 'bias' (as a potential source of data contamination/threat to objectivism; Varpio et al. 2021), *nor* writing styles for reporting small q research practices and outputs

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[4]We acknowledge that reporting the number of transcript pages can be a useful proxy for the quality of qualitative interviews – demonstrating that participants talked at length – even though page numbers can vary significantly depending on the use of font, font size, line and paragraph spacing etc.

translate well, if at all, for Big Q Qualitative, typically producing a 'muddle' (incongruence) if used.

In (US) psychology, dominant considerations for good reporting practice are implicitly shaped by (post)positivist and scientific realist norms (Walsh 2015). Considering writing specifically, Walsh argued that the dominance of APA Style has hampered qualitative psychologists' ability to experiment with the diverse formats and styles of reporting qualitative research that may be evident in other disciplines (see also Gaddefors and Cunningham 2024). Tracy (2012, 112) argued that 'most reviewers and editors still expect grounded, interpretive, or iterative research articles to proceed in roughly the same format as quantitative and postpositive empirical analyses.' The dominant structure for academic (social) science journal articles typically unfolds as 'four-act play' (p. 112) with: 1) intro-duction/literature review; 2) methods; 3) results/findings; and 4) discussion. A deductive rationale for the research is presented in the introduction/literature review, which draws on existing research and theory to identify a 'gap.' In the method section, 'the procedures for collecting and analysing data are often written in an efficient, formulaic, and rule-based fashion – suggesting that such procedures progressed in a linear rational manner and could be replicated by other researchers if desired' (p. 112). Indeed, even though qualitative researchers do not *aim* for replicability, the norm of replicability is often suggested as useful in guiding the reporting of qualitative methods (e.g., Treharne and Riggs 2015), framed around ensuring *transparency* of reporting (we discuss transparency below). Inadvertent acquiescence to (inappropriate) positivist-empiricist or objectivist measures or standards risks both individual reporting quality, and reinforcing disciplinarily dominant ideals (see Masaryk and Stainton Rogers 2024). This aligns with Riley et al.'s (2019) conclusion about (British) qualitative psychology, where 'the key challenge for researchers using interpretivist qualitative methods is having to fit into systems of governance that are designed, for the most part, by and for quantitative researchers' (p. 476). Quality measures like checklists and standards can function as key tools of such governance.

Psychologists Morrill and Rizo (2023) noted (from the US context) that the rise of qualitative research 'requires vigilance to avoid assimilation and uncritical adoption of hegemonic practices' (p. 412). Many existing reporting checklists and standards facilitate and even encourage a muddying of small q and Big Q in reporting qualitative research, as do the expectations and requirements of reviewers and editors (Braun and Clarke 2021a; see also Pearson et al. 2015):

> journal articles may be assessed by reviewers who do not fully understand the diversity of qualitative approaches and theoretical frameworks. Commonly encountered issues include the inappropriate application of positivist quality criteria or an expectation that narrow and postpositivist checklists for quality qualitative research should be applied across the broad qualitative methodological spectrum (e.g., expecting data saturation even if grounded theory is not being applied or inter-rater reliability for thematic analyses). (Riley et al. 2019, 468)

Our current research on qualitative researchers' experiences of the peer review process demonstrates that qualitative researchers often *know* that their reporting practices are incongruent, but nonetheless feel obliged to conform with checklist and reviewer/editor requirements, because of expectations to 'publish or perish' (Clarke et al. 2024).

We now turn our discussion to checklists, standards and guidelines, with a focus on why language matters, why development methodology matters, and the (inadvertent) consequences of assuming the universality of qualitative research concepts and practices (in a (post)positivist-dominated context). This sets the scene for Section C, where we introduce the BQQRG, our methodology for developing it, and our hopes and expectations around 'appropriate' use of it.

What's in a name? Reporting checklists, standards and guidelines

Although the terms checklists, standards and guidelines are often used interchangeably, we think there are important differences, and terminology matters. *Checklists* encompass a list of items that should be present in an article, and reflect what Sparkes and Smith (2009) described as a criteriological approach to judging quality – an assumption of universal and stable markers of reporting quality, and the inference that the more items are checked, the more transparent and comprehensive, and therefore better, the reporting. COREQ (Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig 2007) is probably the most cited and influential checklist in psychology and related disciplines – it is recommended/required by numerous journals, particularly in health care research. It includes 32 items across three domains: research team and reflexivity, study design, analysis and findings. COREQ compliance reviews evidence this criteriological approach – where quality of reporting is equated with the number of items present in a report (e.g., Al-Moghrabi et al. 2019; Walsh et al. 2020), with studies rated as 'good' if 25 or more of the 32 items are present. Within this logic, checklists invoke the inference that absence of meeting a criterion reflects a flaw or a failure to produce an imagined perfect report. (Given COREQ's influence, in a related manuscript we have separately developed a specific critique of COREQ as a (mis)measure of quality for Big Q Qualitative; Braun and Clarke (2024a).)

Reporting *standards* – such as JARS-Qual (Levitt et al. 2018) – are less rigid than checklists, and eschew the notion of *universal* markers of quality. The JARS-Qual is increasingly widely cited, including adoption by *The British Journal of Health Psychology* (Shaw et al. 2019). Levitt et al. (2018, 27) described the JARS-Qual as articulating 'what information should be expected in a manuscript to enable its adequate evaluation. They are an explicit set of criteria for authors to reflect upon in preparing manuscripts and for reviewers to consider while evaluating the rigor of a manuscript.' Note the flexibility signalled by 'reflect upon' and 'consider.' Levitt et al. acknowledged that 'one size does not fit all' because of the diversity

within qualitative research and that 'qualitative reports need to be evaluated in terms of their own logic of inquiry' (p. 28). They noted that they 'worked to generate substantive recommendations that are congruent with, and would enhance, the reporting of qualitative methods when imported within a diverse range of approaches' (p. 32). JARS-Qual is concerned with comprehensive and transparent reporting, like COREQ, but here researchers have some freedom and flexibility in how they address the items that constitute the standards. The standards are expressed as descriptions of information *recommended* for inclusion. Levitt et al. defined the terms/vocabulary they used (e.g., approach to inquiry; data-collection strategies; data-analytic strategies; research design) and 'encourage authors to translate our terms into those of their preferred approaches' (p. 32). Despite Levitt et al.'s care to not suggest monolithic/universal framings and criteria, our caution is that using the language of 'standards' evokes an ideal, a standard to meet, and risks them getting read and used in prescriptive and/or criteriological ways.

Why do we offer *guidelines* rather than criteria or standards? It may seem like we are splitting hairs, but it is important to signal our *intent* in the term we use – and, as discursively trained researchers, we understand language as something that matters in micro and macro ways. Buus and Perron (2020) argued for a distinction between criteria and guidelines. For them, the former consist of standardised and observable items – reviewers should be able to use them with little error and with high levels of agreement. To some, guidelines may be a synonym of standards, but for us the term feels a bit looser and less directive. To us, standards and criteria signal achievements, or an outcome, whereas guidelines seem more to evoke a *process to an outcome*. We like the idea that guidelines are things that should be *considered* when judging a report of research, and they rely more on reviewers' interpretative judgements, and experienced and knowledgeable 'connoisseur' reviewers (Sandelowski 2015; Sparkes and Smith 2009). As guidelines are not rules, there is hopefully less risk that they are 'thoughtlessly' adhered to or treated as narrowly prescriptive, although we acknowledge this is still possible (perhaps a risk of any attempt to define, codify or guide). They may also allow more room for an orientation to quality around matters of taste (rather than rules), which Sandelowski (2015) characterised as judgements based within a community of 'taste-makers' who bring (shifting, expert) 'aesthetic' preferences to the evaluation of qualitative reports. Although, recognising many reviewers are not such experts (Riley et al. 2019), we hope that our inclusion of concepts, practices and terminology *to avoid* – and accompanying notes – in the BQQRG will be useful for those less experienced and knowledgeable.

Naming our discontent (with checklists and standards)

COREQ offers a proceduralist, small q, definition of qualitative research: 'qualitative studies use non-quantitative methods to contribute new knowledge and

provide new perspectives on healthcare' (Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig 2007, 350). The authors did acknowledge diversity within qualitative research at the level of method ('qualitative research encompasses a broad range of study methods,' p. 350), and at the level of methodology and theory, although they muddle together theory, methodology and method:

> Theoretical frameworks in qualitative research include: grounded theory, to build theories from the data; ethnography, to understand the culture of groups with shared character-istics; phenomenology, to describe the meaning and significance of experiences; discourse analysis, to analyse linguistic expression; and content analysis, to systematically organise data into a structured format. (Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig 2007, 351)

This acknowledgement of diversity is not, however, translated into the checklist items, which reference numerous concepts and practices that are at best irrelevant to, and at worst incongruent with, many qualitative approaches (e.g., data satura-tion; participant validation of transcripts and 'findings;' coding trees – see Braun and Clarke 2021b; Motulsky 2021; Smith and McGannon 2017; Varpio et al. 2017). Furthermore, incongruence seems to be hardwired into COREQ – with items referring to both small q conceptions of researcher 'bias' (as contamination/threat to objectivity) and influence, and Big Q notions of researcher reflexivity. These very different theoretically-bounded conceptualisations of researcher subjectivity, and its role in research, are treated as interchangeable. This slippage means COREQ has the potential to promote methodological incongruence, and only supports transparency/reflexive openness to the extent that the sometimes idiosyncratic items in COREQ informed the design and conduct of the research (see Braun and Clarke 2024a).

COREQ, like many other similar tools (e.g., the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research [SRQR], O'Brien et al. 2014), was developed through a process of consolidation/synthesis and consensus (Munthe-Kaas et al. 2019) – consolidation of existing, what the authors described as, 'checklists used to assess or review qualitative studies, and guidelines for reporting qualitative studies' (p. 351), and consensus among the authors (Peditto 2018). The 22 items that informed the development of COREQ were a diverse mix of guidelines for evaluating qualitative research, discussions of quality standards for qualitative research, narrative, meta-ethnographic, and systematic reviews of research in particular areas, and critical appraisal checklists, in fields including nursing, medicine/health care, medical education, and social research. Bracketing concerns about the questionable meth-odology used to develop COREQ (Buus and Perron 2020 were not able to replicate COREQ; see also Braun and Clarke 2024a), the problem with consensus – and by extension consolidation/synthesis, which can be viewed as a different pathway to consensus – is that it is a rather objectivist indicator of quality. To quote Morse (1997), from a critique of the use of superficial coding schemes to support inter-rater reliability, consensus potentially results in quality criteria/standards that are 'perfectly healthy but dead' (p. 446). Consensus is largely meaningless as

a methodology for determining qualitative reporting standards, absent a consideration of the research values underpinning particular concepts, practices and terminology. Even if everyone agrees, agreement is irrelevant if the thing agreed on isn't a good conceptual fit: twenty 'experts' agreeing that saturation should be included in a checklist does not magically transform saturation, a theoretically-bounded concept with specific ontological and epistemological roots (Varpio et al. 2017), into a theoretically-neutral or trans-theoretical concept that applies to *all* qualitative research. Developing a checklist or standards from a consolidation/synthesis of existing standards effectively recycles the (problematic) foundationalist norms that have governed discussions of quality in numerous disciplines (Smith and McGannon 2017; Varpio et al. 2017).

JARS-Qual (Levitt et al. 2018) was developed by a process of author/expert-consensus, following a review of literature on qualitative research reporting. Thus, it shares with COREQ the problem of an objectivist methodology. It does, however, provide a much broader definition of qualitative research, and one that we think does a better job of acknowledging diversity:

> The term *qualitative research* is used to describe a set of approaches that analyze data in the form of natural language (i.e., words) and expressions of experiences (e.g., social interactions and artistic presentations). Researchers tend to centralize examination of meanings within an iterative process of evolving findings – typically viewing this process as driven by induction (cf. Wertz 2010) – and viewing subjective descriptions of experiences as legitimate data for analyses. (Levitt et al. 2018, 27; emphasis in original)

For us as *critical* qualitative researchers, a definition which centres experience always sounds our alarm bells, as we frequently encounter expectations of (quality) practice grounded in an experiential qualitative norm. Levitt et al. acknowledged that language is never neutral, and, as previously noted, invited researchers to 'translate our terms into those of their own preferred approaches' (p. 32). However, the table outlining the reporting standards, and Levitt's (2020) book length explication of these, often inadvertently default towards (post)positivist framings. For example, researchers are recommended to discuss how the researcher's prior understandings were managed and/or influenced the research, and saturation is offered as the only example of a rationale for stopping data collection (Clarke 2021) – both of which evoke an out-there truth/reality, and a researcher separate from it, and able to determine it with the correct processes. Both Levitt (2020), the JARS-Qual lead author and lead author of a companion paper on methodological integrity in designing and reviewing qualitative research (Levitt et al. 2017), and Morrow (2005), a co-author on Levitt et al. (2018), have reflected on their 'latent post-positivist tendencies' (Morrow 2005, 250) – unsurprising given the dominance of postpositivism in US psychology (Grzanka and Moradi 2021). The challenge for qualitative psychologists in the US in particular has no doubt been similar to the challenge Varpio et al. (2017) outlined for qualitative researchers in the field of health professions education: to achieve legitimacy within a quantitative

and (post)positivist dominated discipline, qualitative researchers designed studies that would be acceptable to their quantitative colleagues, using methods and methodologies congruent with (post)positivist paradigms/epistemologies, such as qualitative content analysis (e.g., Forman and Damschroder 2008), Glaserian grounded theory (Glaser 1978), consensual qualitative research (Stahl, Taylor, and Hill 2012) and what we have termed 'coding reliability' approaches to thematic analysis (e.g., Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012). In many ways, US qualitative psychology exemplifies the uncomfortable small q/Big Q qualitative mingle that underpins many qualitative quality and reporting checklists and standards.

JARS-Qual attempts to incorporate and speak to both (post)positivist/small q *and* non-positivist/Big Q qualitative. But without *overtly* acknowledging or clearly demarcating these as very *different* – and potentially incommensurable (Lincoln, Lynham, and Denzin 2024) – qualitative traditions, our concern is that a (post)positivist-norm dominates, producing what is an *unknowing* interpretation and application – particularly for those coming to qualitative out of quantitative-positivist training contexts (see also Riley et al. 2019). JARS-Qual relies on researchers and reviewers/editors interpreting and translating the standards for a particular approach, while also acknowledging the need for qualitative reporting standards *because* of the lack of knowledge and expertise among reviewers and editors. The risk here is that unknowing reviewers and editors lack the depth of knowledge to interpret the standards, and to knowingly disentangle the (post) positivism from the non-positivism. Our own experience, frequent qualitative researcher complaints on *X/Twitter* about methodologically incongruent reviewer feedback, and others' observations (Riley et al. 2019) suggest this risk is realised. So although there is much to recommend JARS-Qual, and we really like the conceptual frame of methodological integrity (Levitt et al. 2017), for researchers doing Big Q Qualitative research, the real-world use of JARS-Qual has the potential to introduce incongruence.

Section C: a new set of guidelines

This isn't our first foray into quality and reporting guidelines. We have developed several sets of quality and reporting guidelines for TA: checklist criteria for good TA (Braun and Clarke 2006; we used the term checklist *unknowingly* there and wouldn't use the same terminology now); a tool for evaluating TA manuscripts for publication (Braun and Clarke 2021a); recommendations for producing methodologically congruent TA and becoming a knowing researcher (Braun and Clarke 2022a, 2023a); best practice recommendations for conducting and reporting TA in health psychology (Braun and Clarke 2023a); reporting standards for reflexive TA (Braun and Clarke 2022a; again, we wouldn't use 'standards' now); and Reflexive TA Reporting Guidelines (RTARG) (Braun and Clarke 2024b), intended to replace COREQ and SRQR in fields like healthcare where the use of reporting checklists is often mandated by journals. In developing and presenting the BQQRG, our scope

shifts beyond TA, to Big Q Qualitative – even as we still have similar debates between ourselves, to those articulated by Finlay (2006, 320): 'it is with mixed feelings that I write this paper on "criteria", recognising that is both a game and a serious undertaking . . . '.

Why (these) guidelines are needed: caveat emptor

Before we discuss the principles that we think should shape and guide the reporting of Big Q Qualitative research, and that the BQQRG is intended to facilitate, we explain *why* we think these guidelines are needed – beyond the simple point that (Big Q Qualitative) research should be evaluated on its own terms (Finlay 2006). Although *much* has already been written on quality (e.g., Flick 2018), we suggest there is a *pragmatic* need for Big Q Qualitative guidelines, to support less expert scholars in reporting methodologically congruent and reflexively open qualitative research, wrestling with (unknowingly) small q positioned reviewers and editors, and indeed *for* less expert reviewers and editors themselves (Finlay 2006; Pearson et al. 2015). We consider such guidance pedagogically (Tracy 2010), pragmatically but also *rhetorically* valuable. As well as making an earnest contribution to discussions about quality, guidelines provide researchers with a *strategic tool* for responding to unknowing but confident and insistent reviewers or editors. With the BQQRG, not only we are arguing for the legitimacy and adoption of a reporting approach that more congruently reflects the ethos and values of Big Q Qualitative (Gilgun 2005; Tracy 2012; Walsh 2015), we are offering other researchers a tool to argue with, to 'resist demands to utilize procedures or practice that are mismatched' (Morrill and Rizo 2023, 413).[5]

There is always the risk that guidelines will be interpreted as rules, as 'a new mandate to be followed' and compliance treated as a guarantee of success (Goldberg and Allen 2015, 3). However, critiquing reporting (and quality) guidelines requires knowledge, and those who critique such tools (e.g., Buus and Perron 2020) – including us – often do so from positions of considerable expertise. Based on our experience, we suspect that many people doing qualitative research do not have such deep reserves of experience to draw on. In this context, we concur with Tracy (2010; also Finlay 2006) who, when outlining her eight 'big-tent' quality criteria, argued that 'criteria, quite simply, are useful. Rules and guidelines help us learn, practice, and perfect' (p. 838). Tracy cited learning research that demonstrates that novices in any craft rely on rules and structures to learn, meaning 'guidelines and best practices regularly serve as helpful pedagogical launching pads across a variety of interpretive arts' (p. 838). A rejection of clear and accessible guidance can make qualitative research not just elitist and inaccessible, but allow perpetuation of disciplinary dominant – and deeply problematic (from

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[5]For some, even what we articulate as a fairly cautious and delimited/grounded approach to reporting and evaluating Big Q Qualitative would be understood as a kind of ongoing obedience to foundationalist positivist science norms and values, rather than a resistive, provocative (fully) qualitative endeavour (e.g., Denzin 2024).

a conceptual congruence perspective) – touchstones about what constitutes 'good practice' (Varpio et al. 2017, 2021). Reporting guidelines are also viewed as important – particularly in health research – from the perspective of improving the quality (particularly with regard to transparency and comprehensiveness) of reports of research, and increasing the likelihood of their inclusion in qualitative systematic reviews or syntheses (Pearson et al. 2015). Given the increasing dominance of these as techniques for establishing trustworthy and useful evidence, this is an important consideration for researchers working in applied fields.

We are arguing for the value of *guidelines*, while also arguing against unknowing uptake of problematic checklists and standards. The BQQRG is intended to replace checklists like COREQ and SRQR, and even reporting standards like JARS-Qual, for Big Q Qualitative research, specifically and *only*. Attempting to report small q qualitative research using these guidelines would almost certainly produce methodological incongruence. We pragmatically have designed the guidelines to orient to the dominant (hypothetico-deductive-modelled) four-part paper structure (see Tracy 2012), with sections conventionally termed *Introduction*, *Method*, *Results* and *Discussion* (our preferred terms are *Introduction*, *Methodology*, *Analysis* and *Discussion/Conclusion*; see Table 1). Parts of the BQQRG *may* be relevant to qualitative researchers using other reporting formats (see Tracy 2012), and creative approaches like poetic inquiry (e.g., Lupton 2021), but this is not something we would confidently claim. Our intent in producing these guidelines is not to stifle creativity (see LaMarre and Chamberlain 2022), nor to suggest that there is 'one best way' (Walsh 2015, 44) for composing qualitative journal articles; we agree with Walsh (2015) that we should 'nurture a spirit of pluralism for writing preferences' (p. 44), telling a qualitative research story in the best way for the context and purpose of the research. Nonetheless, guidance *against* a small q (post)positivist norm remains important for Big Q Qualitative to flourish on its own terms, given the norms that remain entrenched (and unquestioned) in some spaces.

Methodological congruence/integrity and reflexive openness/transparency

Our focus here is on guidance for researchers *reporting* Big Q Qualitative research and for reviewers and editors *evaluating* reports. We focus on a slight reworking of methodological rigour and comprehensive reporting, two well-established quality concepts (Buus and Perron 2020; Pearson et al. 2015). Our reworking frames methodological rigour as *methodological congruence* (Pearson et al. 2015), a notion also reframed by Levitt et al. (2017) as methodological integrity. And we reorient the idea of comprehensive reporting to become transparency (Tuval-Mashiach 2017) or *reflexive openness* (Jacobs et al. 2021).

Rigour is tied to the conduct of research – if the research itself wasn't rigorous, it is unlikely that the reporting will be. Methodological congruence, although an

important feature of the conduct of research, is a concrete aspect of *reporting* that *can* be evaluated by readers. A concept of methodological congruence (or integrity, or coherence) is widely used to convey research where the different elements (knowingly) 'fit together'– the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research, the research questions/aims, the research design/methodology, methods, the treatment of data, and so on, align conceptually (e.g., Chamberlain et al. 2011; Crotty 1998; Finlay 2006; Hills 2000; Levitt et al. 2017; Matthews 2014; Tracy 2010; Willig 2021; Yardley 2024). In some cases, this is articulated as a 'flow' from epistemology/ontology through research questions to data and analysis/reporting (e.g., Clark 2003; Matthews 2014), a direction conveyed in the language of paradigmatic integrity (Hills 2000); others argue for a more *multidirectional* influence (e.g., Maxwell 2022). Regardless of how (and when) it is established, the idea of fit, delimited by metatheory, is at the heart of congruence.

From reading an article, it should be possible to judge if there is incongruence – for example, if a researcher claims a constructionist or discursive perspective, but treats language (data) as a transparent window onto the lived experience of participants, rather than – congruent with a constructionist or discursive approach – as something productive and/or performative (see Hall 1997). We argue that assessing and delivering congruence requires a 'knowing' researcher – where the researcher strives to 'own their perspectives' (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie 1999), both theoretical and personal, is deliberative in their decision-making, and reflexive in their research practice and reporting (Braun and Clarke 2023b). For a researcher to share their assumptions with the reader, and to assess their own research reporting for methodological congruence, they must have some degree of insight into these. Such 'knowingness' is important both for evaluating methodological congruence, and explaining and arguing for any disjunctures from congruence (Tracy 2010).

Transparency and reflexive openness capture what the researcher did, and how and why they did it – their theoretical assumptions, research goals, practices of generating 'evidence,' analytic processes, researcher positionality and subjectivity, and openness with research participants (Tuval-Mashiach 2017). We recognise practical limits on transparency/reflexive openness, in terms of the researcher's ethical obligations to protect participants and their communities, and researcher safety. And a researcher's (always limited) capacity for insight into their assumptions and implicit values, and how these shaped their practices – although critical reflexivity as an *ongoing* practice can chip away at the things that keep our deeply embedded epistemological and other assumptions 'hidden' (Hunter 2002). For this reason, we emphasise a practice oriented *toward* reflexive openness as important for ensuring that standards of assessment appropriate to the logic of enquiry are employed (Jacobs et al. 2021) – qualitative research cannot be assessed on its own terms if the researcher has not been clear about what those terms are. Reflexive openness also includes reporting in a way that doesn't emphasise 'technical description' and writing out the researcher (see Gaddefors and Cunningham

2024). This is an argument for greater openness about what goes on 'behind the scenes' (Tuval-Mashiach 2017), or 'back stage' (Chenail 1995) – for more 'honesties' in research reporting (Finlay 2006). Suppressing discussion of evolutions in purpose, changes in direction, false-starts and even failures seems problematic (Buus and Agdal 2013; Tracy 2012), given the flexibility and fluidity of qualitative research.

"Methodology" for producing the BQQRG

We use the term methodology somewhat ironically to describe our *process* for producing the BQQRG, because, unlike many other reporting checklists and standards, these guidelines are *not* based on consolidation/synthesis or (expert) consensus. The BQQRG is unapologetically subjective, and represents our Big Q 'take' on reporting Big Q Qualitative research, building on existing guidelines, and our own perspectives and experience.

As the BQQRG is intended to provide an exclusively Big Q alternative to existing checklists and standards, our formal process started with JARS-Qual, COREQ, and SRQR. We reasoned through the individual items/elements, debating whether they cohered with Big Q values (or not), and thus promoted methodological congruence and reflexive openness. We retained or reworked items/ elements we felt did broadly cohere with Big Q reporting; others, we rejected or replaced. We read widely on reporting guidelines, and critiques, and took from other guidelines anything useful that wasn't already captured by our reworking of items from JARS-Qual, COREQ and SRQR. As authors will tussle with (unknowingly) small q inclined reviewers and editors (Riley et al. 2019), we thought it useful to also highlight concepts and practices *to avoid*, the sorts of things commonly but mistakenly assumed to be generic.

We do not claim these guidelines as either flawless manifestations of Big Q, or the final thing to be said on the topic! For example, we still use the term 'data' (Braun and Clarke 2024c), when some argue strongly against this term, and for replacing this with 'empirical materials,' because data invokes a positivist epistemology (e.g., Denzin 2013, 2024; St Pierre 2013). Likewise, we still use the term method, when some argue for replacing this with 'practices of inquiry' (Gergen 2014), because the concept of 'research methods' is tied to positivist empiricism. Indeed, there isn't (yet) a wholesale rejection of quantitative-derived terminology in Big Q Qualitative research – and some terms *are* reworked and given new meanings (e.g., on generalisation, see Smith 2018; for a non-positivist take on 'data', see Sandelowski 2011). We use a range of terms in the BQQRG, but may indeed change our minds on what language works best (from our perspective) in the future. While language matters, it is not our intention to *mandate* the use of particular terms – because we recognise context also matters. So, like Levitt et al. (2018), we encourage authors to *reflect on* the terms they use (in any one context), and what those terms connote, and to use terms that are conceptually consistent

with their underlying research values. With the BQQRG, we hope to promote a values-oriented and thoughtful – knowing or reflexively aware – approach to qualitative practice, rather than a mechanistic or technocratic one. In this way, we seek to work against methodolatry (Chamberlain 2000) by offering tools to support thought-ful practice.

The potential for *us* to change our minds raises another important point: the BQQRG, if liked/valued by scholars, reviewers and editors, may take on a life of its own (or it may disappear into obscurity!). Fundamentally, it is *of a time and place*. Just like the knowledge Big Q produces, it is situated, partial and subjective. These guidelines should not be fixed; they can and should evolve – as we do as qualitative researchers, and as the practice of qualitative research evolves. New approaches are developed, concepts once accepted are deemed problematic and outdated (Smith and McGannon 2017; Tod, Booth, and Smith 2022), old approaches are revived, redeveloped and redeployed. We are partial, both knowing and unknowing, and we are constantly evolving, learning, reflecting. We change our minds, develop our practice, learn from others, take on board helpful feedback and reflections (e.g., Braun and Clarke 2019). So, these guidelines reflect where we are at now, and that may change – indeed, we hope they do. We may choose to revise and update the BQQRG; others may choose to do this work (much as we have sought to develop a fully and solely Big Q alternative to COREQ and JARS-Qual).

Introducing the BQQRG

The BQQRG (Table 1) presents elements of a Big Q Qualitative manuscript. We offer a column of *Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches*, a column of *Practices to avoid and avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)*, and a column of *Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q* – where we feel some explanation may be necessary or helpful. Some of the listed items are descriptive, specifying material that authors should consider including when reporting qualitative research (if relevant to a particular study design/approach). Others are evaluative, requiring authors to critically appraise their report for methodological congruence and reflexive openness. We encourage authors to make use of supplementary materials where possible, to meaningfully address these reporting guidelines, if the main manuscript does not allow inclusion. We urge reviewers and editors to begin the evaluation of any manuscript by reflecting on their own values and beliefs, and to try and maintain an awareness of how these shape their interpretation of a manuscript (Tod, Booth, and Smith 2022).

Finally, we invite readers to hold the guidance in the BQQRG loosely (see Gergen 2014). To use the BQQRG thoughtfully and strategically; to be aware of what is 'at stake,' and to use the tool 'judiciously' (Finlay 2006, 232). We also ask that you do not allow it to suppress innovation and diversity within (the reporting of) qualitative research (Goldberg and Allen 2015).

Table 1. Big Q Qualitative Reporting Guidelines (BQQRG) for authors, reviewers and editors.[1]

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Writing style	• Reflexive, subjective, personalised, humanised, contextualised, passionate (Walsh 2015), lively, evocative, compelling (Gilgun 2005) writing; • The researcher 'written in' rather than out of the methodological account (Gaddefors and Cunningham 2024).	• Objective, neutral, detached, distanced, decontextualized, passive, dispassionate writing.	• Big Q researchers 'write from a particular standpoint in a particular place and time and only can produce a partial account of their subject-matter' (Walsh 2015, 43).
Terminology	• Defining key terms and concepts (if relevant); • Explaining chosen terms for any contested terminology.	• Stigmatising and pathologising terminology (consult literature/communities relevant to the research area/topic).	• Much terminology in qualitative research is contested. What's important is that the researchers explain *their* usage rather than conforming to particular – dominant – understandings.
Title	• A title that captures the topic area and/or the central storyline of the analysis; potentially also the method/ology; • A title that engages, intrigues, entices the reader; • If aiming to maximise discoverability, a title that includes 1–2 keywords in first part.	• Abbreviations.	
Abstract and keywords (NB content will vary depending on length restrictions; keywords may be restricted by Journal platform)	• Summarising key points of the article; • Contextualising the study/topic/research question; • Indicating theoretical approach and study design/methodology/practices of inquiry, including participants/empirical materials; • Outlining main analytic arguments/observations; • Signalling conclusions/implications; • Keywords that offer information beyond title, related to topic, approach, etc.[3]	• Segmenting the abstract by the sections and content of positivist-empiricist reporting traditions (though this may be required).	• Structured abstracts can limit what and how information is conveyed. Allowing flexibility to not use, or adapt, structured abstract headings helps not just to enable congruent presentation of Qualitative research, but for the essence of the research to best be conveyed.

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Introduction Authors can sequence the various elements of this section in whatever order works best for their approach/article. If a heading is needed for this section, we prefer *Introduction* over *Literature Review* to capture the broad purpose this section serves.			
Background and rationale	• Framing the research as entering a *conversation* about the issue; • Providing a robust context and rationale for the proposed research; • Discussing (reviewing/critiquing/synthesising) existing research, theory, and the wider contexts (e.g., social, policy, practice, political, ideological, etc.) relevant to contextualising the study; • Engaging deeply with any existing *qualitative* research; • Situating other knowledge as partial and produced from a perspective (especially when discussing research with a different values base, such as quantitative) – including where relevant, the implications of methodological elements of other studies.	• Discussing existing *quantitative* literature in a way that suggests the author aligns with the philosophical assumptions underpinning it (if these are not congruent with Big Q); • Centring *critiquing* the methodological limitations of existing research, and from a (post)positivist standpoint, as a key foundational justification for your own study (without a clear reason).	• Methodological critique per se (pointing out flaws to signal how much better *this* study will be) is not generally a key foundational justificatory technique for Big Q; in some cases, methodological critique is appropriate (e.g., of problematic assumptions and exclusions, terminology; to make the case for a new – to a topic/field – methodology), but it's not a *necessary* element in reporting.
Research question, aims, and/or purpose	• Articulating research questions, aims, and/or purpose clearly; • Demonstrating methodological congruence between questions (etc.[4]) and overall approach; • Noting if article is part of a wider study and linking to other publications, while ensuring the article focus is clear, and information provided fully informs the reader, on its own (reading other publications should only enhance understanding, not be required for it); • Discussing any shift or refinement from a broader/different research question to the one addressed in the article.	• Formulating research questions as hypotheses or expectations about what might be 'found;' • Implicitly formulating research questions in terms of measuring relationships between variables (e.g., effects of X on Y); • In experiential qualitative, formulating research questions in ways that don't take account of subjectivity (e.g., aiming to [directly] explore X phenomenon rather than participants' perspectives on or experiences around X phenomenon).	• The practice of splitting a dataset is referred to – disparagingly – as 'salami slicing' in quantitative research (Menon and Muraleedharan 2016). This critique sometimes gets deployed unjustly against qualitative research. It is legitimate to report a qualitative study across multiple articles; each article should have a distinct focus (Levitt et al. 2018).

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
'Owning your perspectives' – discussion of theory (this content may be addressed instead in the Methodology)	• Including information about guiding meta-theoretical assumptions, and any other (e.g., explanatory, political/ ideological) theory informing the research; • Demonstrating methodological congruence between guiding (e.g., paradigmatic, ontological and epistemological) and any other theory.	• Ontological and epistemological incongruence (e.g., claiming constructionism, but focusing on lived experience and treating language as a transparent window onto this); • Implicitly or explicitly using objectivist and/or foundationalist thinking, either overall or 'mashed-up' with Big Q assumptions (e.g., using reflexive thematic analysis [TA] but assuming data interpretation can be accurate and reliable); • Using concepts and terminology incongruent with claimed theoretical framework (e.g., claiming constructionism but drawing on social cognitive constructs of body image, attitudes etc.); • Treating theoretically embedded and delimited constructs as theoretically neutral/trans-theoretical (e.g., treating constructs developed in quantitative research traditions as straightforwardly transferable to qualitative research).	• The research *and* the report should evidence methodological congruence/ integrity (Levitt et al. 2017) – meaning theoretical assumptions, research questions, methodology, practices of data generation and analysis, purpose of research etc. 'fit' together conceptually. • Incongruence often comes in through mismatches between (stated) theoretical assumptions, and various aspects of the report, such as in the use of language and concepts (e.g., around theme development, research subjectivity, data interpretation), treatment of data, and quality practices. Common language and practices often reflect potentially conceptually incongruent (with Big Q) ideas and assumptions, so it's important to be attuned to language.
'Owning your perspectives' – discussion of reflexivity (this content may be addressed instead in the Methodology)	• Discussing researcher professional or personal positioning[5] and experience, or the broader contexts shaping their experiences and perspectives (Lazard and McAvoy 2020), in relation to the topic and/or participant group and/or their role in shaping the research; • Demonstrating critical reflexivity – interrogation of social positioning	• Referencing researcher 'bias' (as contamination/threat to objectivity); • Referencing researcher 'influence' – framed as *possible* rather than inevitable; • Referencing the researcher's prior understandings/expectations, and framing these (implicitly) as	• First person writing is good practice for Big Q, as it positions the researcher *in* the research (Gaddefors and Cunningham 2024). • While positioning and 'owning perspectives' is good practice, requiring individual researchers to disclose *personal* information, especially when it might be discrediting or

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
'Owning your perspectives' – discussion of reflexivity (this content may be addressed instead in the Methodology) (continued)	and how structural and interpersonal dynamics shaped the research, and the reporting (Grzanka and Moradi 2021); • Referencing reflexive journaling as part of research practice if used; • Using first person writing style when discussing researcher reflexivity, decisions etc.	a potential source of contamination/distortion; • Writing the researcher out of the research by using a third person writing style.	stigmatising, and/or researchers are members of marginalised communities (Grzanka and Moradi 2021), is not. • There is no ideal location for researcher reflexivity in Big Q reporting, so *where* reflexivity should appear in an article should not be prescriptive (Wu et al. 2016).

Methodology
We prefer the theoretically-embedded term *Methodology* over the proceduralist term *Method* as a section title. Again, the order of information is not prescriptive, although it is typically easier to follow if rationale/approach precedes specific aspects of design and procedure. Whether and how subsection headings are used should be flexibly situationally determined – flexibility helps avoid redundancy/duplication of information.

Research design/approach/methodology (this content may sometimes be better located earlier in the article)	• Describing the research design/approach/methodology; • Providing a rationale for the selected design, etc.; • Explaining the conceptual framing for any multi-method or pluralistic (vs. single method) design (e.g., Chamberlain et al. 2011).	• Implicitly positioning quantitative research and designs as the norm/ideal.	• Proving a default justification for qualitative research *per se*, as opposed to quantitative, may be required in certain contexts, but unlikely in those that welcome Big Q.
Participants/data sources/empirical materials	• Describing the selection and number of participants/data items, and rationale for these; • Explaining the criteria for selection/recruitment strategies;	• Using common terms/concepts like 'sample/sampling' (which connotes 'sampling' from a population for the purposes of statistical generalisation); • Justifying 'sample' size/stopping data generation with reference to criteria	• There is no widespread agreement on what constitutes an appropriate number of participants/data items for qualitative research, and for particular types of research question, methodologies and practices of inquiry etc.

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Participants/data sources/empirical materials (continued)	• Discussing dataset size and scope with reference to non-positivist qualitative concepts, such as 'information power' (Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora 2016) or sufficiency, orienting to the quality of the dataset to address the research aims and questions; • Describing the characteristics of participants/data items[6] and recruitment/data generation contexts; • In research with participants, balancing the need to 'situate the participant group' (Elliott, Fischer, and Rennie 1999) with participant anonymity (e.g., aggregating or reporting minimal demographics where appropriate); • Describing the relationship between researchers and participants prior to, during, and after the research, including any ethical considerations (e.g., dual relationships, researcher as insider/outsider); • Describing how the study purpose was communicated to participants, including any definitions of key terms/concepts explained; • Discussing the use of pseudonyms/participant codes (including how chosen, and rationale; see Heaton 2022).	such as (data/code/theme) saturation (i.e., information redundancy) or statistical models as these are often not conceptually congruent (see Braun and Clarke 2021b; Varpio et al. 2017); • Providing demographic information in a way that might compromise anonymity, such as a table showing demographics of each participant; • Using pseudonyms or participant descriptors which compromise participant anonymity.	• Determining a sufficient participant group/dataset size involves interpretative, situated and (especially in student and other unfunded research) pragmatic judgements. • Participant group/dataset size 'anxiety' (such as explanation for a 'small' sample) often reflects the lingering presence of positivism; bigger isn't inherently better – consider the *quality* of the data (to address the research questions/in relation to methods). • As codes/numbers can dehumanise participants, pseudonyms are often preferred.
Ethical approval and ethical code/principles followed	• Detailing institutional ethical approval; • In research with participants, describing processes of informed consent; • Detailing any incentives and compensation, and the rationale for these;	• Compromising participant anonymity by the details provided; • Research is implicitly/unknowingly exclusionary (which limits the contribution of the research).	• Ethical considerations in Big Q often go further, to consider issues beyond those in institutional review, so this section might be expansive.

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Ethical approval and ethical code/principles followed (continued)	• Discussing any study/design/sociopolitical context etc. specific ethical considerations or practices; • Discussing how any concerns related to accessibility and inclusion, equity, and intersectionality were attended to; • Where relevant or appropriate, including research materials (participant information, consent form) in supplementary material.		
Data generation (we prefer the term generation over collection or gathering, as it captures the active role of the researcher and acknowledges that data don't pre-exist research as data; they become data through research)	• Describing and explaining practices of inquiry/data sources chosen (explains e.g., *why* the method/data source is a good fit with the research question, participant group, guiding theory, etc.); • If relevant, explaining the purpose and use of a multi-method or pluralistic design (e.g., crystallisation, Tracy 2010); • Discussing the development and characteristics of data generation tool(s)/ protocol(s) and including tool(s)/ protocol(s) in supplementary material where possible; • Discussing 'piloting' if used, and any changes to and evolution of tool(s)/ protocol(s)/research design following piloting/review, and subsequently during data generation;	• Triangulation of data sources (framed in a realist/objectivist way to get closer to the truth/a more accurate understanding); • Orienting to replication in how data generation is described; • Treating lack of standardisation in data generation method, modality or setting as a problem, a potential source of 'bias' (failure of objectivity); • Seeking standardisation (e.g., through the training of researchers) in interactive data generation; • Equating data *quantity* with data *quality*; • Transcription described as 'verbatim' or 'orthographic' with no further details provided;	• In Big Q, research 'might seem delayed, late or tardy, behind where it is supposed to be' (Howell 2019, 3) – for instance, reporting data generated some years past. Within a Big Q orientation, 'older' data is not in and of itself a good reason for rejecting a manuscript – as relevance often continues given the model is not necessarily superseding one of new knowledge superseding old. • The idea of timeliness and urgency (of data/analysis) is important to deconstruct in relation to the ways the norms and expectations of academia work against groups such as disabled academics. • It is appropriate for accounts of procedures and practices to foreground some of the 'mess' of qualitative researching;

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Data generation (we prefer the term generation over collection or gathering, as it captures the active role of the researcher and acknowledges that data don't pre-exist research as data; they become data through research) (continued)	• Describing the modality (e.g., video call interviews, in person focus groups, online qualitative survey)/setting, and time frame, of data generation, and any other pertinent procedural details; • Noting any audio or video recording of interactive data generation and other data 'recording' practices (e.g., field notes, photography, participant/ researcher drawings); • Noting who (which author or role) completed any interactive data generation; • Describing what, if anything, the researcher disclosed to the participants about their personal or professional positioning or motivation (before or during data generation) if safe to do so; • Describing, if pertinent, the skills and experience the researcher(s) brought to data generation; • Indicating the length/duration of individual data items and the number of data items (if different from the number of participants), where relevant (e.g., mean duration/length and range of interviews/ focus groups, story completion); • Describing the preparation of data for analysis: process of transcription of audio/video data; transcription notation system used (transcription key may be included in supplementary material); removal of any identifying information; if and why typographical errors in written data were corrected; use of pseudonyms or participant/data item codes; editing of data extracts presented in analysis.	• Simply stating transcript page numbers as a measure of the dataset with no further detail; • The data appear to have been edited or 'cleaned up', but there is no acknowledgement of this; • Participant validation of the 'accuracy' of transcripts; • Compromising participant anonymity by the amount of detail provided about the data generation setting or the dates of in-person data generation.	'transparent research is marked by disclosure of the study's challenges and unexpected twists and turns and the revelation of the way research foci transformed over time' (Tracy 2010, 842).
Data analysis procedures	• Describing and explaining the analytic approach; • Where relevant, describing the variant of the approach and/or data orientation (e.g., inductive, deductive etc.);	• Citing generic characteristics of an approach (e.g., accessible, flexible) without explaining *how* these were relevant to the study;	• One coder/analyst is entirely normal and appropriate within Big Q; it does not present a validity threat to the research. • Use of QDAS is not a requirement.

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals e.g. discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
(continued)	the data; • Where analysis is collaborative, discussing how this contributed to researcher reflexivity/insight; • If using an established approach, describing how the researcher(s) engaged with the analytic process, and how the analysis was developed; • If tweaking/changing, or supplementing, the procedures associated with an established approach, explaining how and why; • Using supplementary material, if necessary, to provide a fuller account of the analytic process; • Using language appropriate to the role of the researcher in developing the analysis (e.g., in reflexive TA, language around theme development conveys the active role of the researcher in generating, crafting, constructing, creating or developing themes); • Describing any software (QDAS) used during the analytic process; • If tools or modalities used for analysis changed (e.g., QDAS > manual process), reflexively discussing rationale for shift and what gained/lost in different tools;	approach, adding alternative/supplementary analytic procedures, without acknowledgement or rationale (e.g., unexplained 'supplementing' of the six phases of reflexive TA with the creation and use of a codebook); • Using inter-coder agreement or consensus coding (as measures of coding accuracy/reliability); • Simply citing established methodologies as 'brand names' (Tuval-Mashiach 2017, 130), without providing further situated detail around use; • Using generic descriptions of procedures or 'technical description of analytical phases' (Gaddefors and Cunningham 2024, 10), rather than discussing how methods have been used in practice; • Incongruent language (e.g., in reflexive TA, themes, implying themes are real things *in* the data that the researcher finds [see Braun and Clarke 2016]; using language and concepts from other methodologies, without acknowledgement/explanation [e.g. emergent and superordinate themes from interpretative phenomenological analysis, line-by-line and/or open coding and constant	

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
(continued)	• Where relevant, discussing how theory informed the analysis, as 'the analyst's reading glasses' (Malterud 2001, p. 484).	comparison from grounded theory in reflexive TA]).	
Quality practices	• Discussing any Big Q congruent quality practices not covered elsewhere. Either here or in the discussion, reflecting on any 'limitations' of the dataset/participant group, study design/approach and procedure (with reference to a contextualised Big Q orientation).	• Using postpositivist criteria for quality, such as triangulation (to get closer to the truth/a more accurate understanding), analysis agreement/consensus among the research team, corroboration of analysis by another researcher; • Using (a foundationalist version of) member checking/participant validation without a congruent – empirical, theoretical or political – rationale (see Motulsky 2021).	• Congruent quality practices in Big Q *can* include (where appropriate, but not always): member reflections, crystallisation (Tracy 2010), other researchers serving as a critical friend/sounding board/mirror (Morrow 2005; Smith and McGannon 2017) to enhance reflexivity, reflexive journaling.

Analysis

For this section, we prefer the heading *Analysis* over *Findings/Results* because it 'connotes the presence of contestable interpretations of human phenomena' (Walsh 2015, 43). In contrast, *Findings* infers the researcher 'found,' 'discovered' or 'identified' pre-existing entities, and *Results* is strongly associated with the outputs of statistical analysis (Walsh 2015). Format/flow and structuring of reported analysis often varies by analytic approach.

Structure, number, and names of patterns/themes/categories/discourses/narratives (etc.)	• Reporting a clear analytic structure; • Reporting an appropriate number of patterns/themes/categories/discourses/narratives (etc.)[7] relative to the length of the article, allowing for depth and detail in the presentation of the analysis.	• Overly elaborated/fragmented or unclear analytic structure; • Reporting a large number of patterns (etc.) relative to the length of the article; • In research using coding, reporting the number of codes (e.g., per pattern) as a validity measure.	• Pattern (etc.) names can be playful, fun, provocative, and engage, entice or intrigue the reader. • It's not uncommon for brief data quotations or paraphrases to be used in pattern (etc.) names – usually if they capture the core of the pattern.
Overview of, or introduction to, analysis, if relevant	• Including an analytic map, table or a list of patterns (etc.), or general contextualisation of the analysis; • Using pattern (etc.) names that align with *Analysis* section subheadings.	• Unexplained headings in the *Analysis* section (not connected to patterns [etc.] as outlined); • Reported patterns (etc.) that don't match the analytic structure previewed.	

Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e. g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Theme/category/discourse/ narrative (etc.) conceptualisation, where relevant	• Using a conceptualisation of patterns (etc.) that is congruent with the approach (e.g., themes in reflexive TA have a central organising concept and report shared meaning); • Explaining/rationalising any divergences in the conceptualisation of patterns (etc.), aligned to methodological congruence.	• Mismatch between pattern (etc.) conceptualisation – either for methodological approach, or as described in the *Methodology* – and what is then reported (e.g., topic summaries as themes in reflexive TA; Braun and Clarke 2022a).	• Qualitative research produces many *differently conceptualised* analytic entities (patterns, etc.). Then within those of the same name/type, there is often considerable variation in how they are conceptualised (e.g., different ideas of 'a theme', 'discourse' etc.).
Analytic depth	• Providing an analytic narrative (around data extracts) that explains the meaning and significance of the data, and researcher's interpretation of them – guided by principle that 'data do not speak for themselves'; • Telling a rich descriptive and/or interpretative story about the data.	• Frequency counts for patterns (etc.); • Analytic foreclosure (e.g., data generation questions reported as 'themes' etc); • Patterns (etc.) that are thin and one dimensional (Inayat et al. 2024); • Simply paraphrasing data; • Data interpretation treated as self-evident; • 'Arguing with' the data – the task of Big Q analysis is generally to make sense of the data, not orient to whether it's wrong or right.	• Using 'semi-quantification' (Neale, Miller, and West 2014) – the use of 'few', 'some', 'many' etc., usually without precise boundaries for these – may sometimes be appropriate in describing analysis, but isn't a requirement.
Use of data extracts, where relevant	• Using a sufficient number and range of extracts from the dataset to convincingly and compellingly evidence analytic claims;	• In approaches reporting patterning *across* a dataset, selecting extracts from a small proportion of the participants/data items without any acknowledgement or rationale;	• Further data extracts and analysis can be included in supplementary materials (Levitt et al. 2017). • The appropriate balance of analytic narrative and data extracts will depend on the analytic method/ology

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Use of data extracts, where relevant (continued)	• Introducing and contextualising data extracts appropriately (so readers can comprehend the content of extracts); • Displaying congruence between data extracts and analytic narrative; • Balancing appropriately the proportion of analytic narrative and evidentiary data extracts; • Appropriately anonymising data extracts; • Ensuring (meta)theoretical concepts informing the analysis, and treatment of language, are congruent with the research approach.	• Providing no data extracts to evidence analytic claims, only a researcher summary; • Writing one sentence/a very brief analytic narrative 'overview' of the pattern (etc.), followed by several data extracts without further analytic elaboration. Without adequate analytic narrative, the reader ends up 'drowning in a sea of endless data' (Chenail 1995, 7); • Insufficient contextualisation of data extracts making the (literal) meaning unclear; • Mismatch between analytic claims and data extracts presented to evidence those claims (analysis is not convincing); • Mismatch between claimed theory/approach and treatment of language (e.g., constructionism/a performative conceptualisation of language claimed, but data treated as a transparent window onto 'experience' [see Hall 1997]); • Data extracts contain information that may compromise participant anonymity.	used and the particular orientation (e.g., inductive/deductive, experiential/critical, descriptive/interpretative); • Data extracts may be used *illustratively*, as general instances of analytic claims (readily interchangeable with other examples without disrupting the analytic narrative). They can also be used *analytically*, where the analysis is developed through commentary on specific features of a data extract. An analytic use typically involves fewer data extracts, and more analytic narrative.
Integration of analysis with existing research and theory	• Drawing on existing research and theory to contextualise analysis *and* (potentially) to deepen data interpretation – here theory is not primarily about conceptual or metatheory (ontology/	• Separation of data/'Results' and interpretation; • Description/summary rather than interpretation of data.	• Integration of other literature into the *Analysis* section is common in Big Q: the 'analysis section is … not a "results" section that describes findings without commentary, as you might find in the

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Integration of analysis with existing research and theory (continued)	epistemology etc.) so much as the explanatory frameworks and concepts that help interpret the data (e.g., healthism; resilience; consent); • Weaving such research and theory through the analytic narrative, as relevant.		write-up of an experimental study' (Riley 2023, 220). • The literature discussed in the *Analysis* doesn't have to be confined to that discussed in the *Introduction*.
Discussion/Conclusion The scope of the *Discussion/Conclusion* will depend on how integrated 'results' and 'discussion' were in the previous *Analysis* section. We recommend avoiding repetition of earlier content in this section, except in the service of developing the arguments of the article further.			
Analytic conclusions and contributions	• Drawing analytic conclusions *across* patterns (etc.); • Discussing the contributions the research has made to existing research, theory, etc, oriented to the broader context of the study, both scholarly and societally; • Considering how our *knowledge* has shifted what/how we know about the topic of the research (related to research).	• Repetitive pattern-by-pattern (etc.) integration of the analysis with existing literature, rather than telling an overall analytic story or drawing overall conclusions.	• The literature drawn on doesn't have to be confined to that discussed in the introduction, and often isn't.
Study evaluation/reflection	• Overall reflexive consideration of the context, process, outcomes and potential consequences of the research. Reflecting openly/honestly on strengths and limitations of the study design, practices of	• Orienting to dominant quantitative norms in evaluation, such as describing the 'sample' as 'small', or 'nonrepresentative';	• From a Big Q standpoint, a study evaluation/reflection might include consideration of: ○ The characteristics and context of the participant group/dataset;

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Study evaluation/reflection (continued)	inquiry, procedures, researcher's decisions, etc, oriented to the scope and parameters of the research itself; • If no separate discussion of researcher reflexivity in this section, reflecting on the researcher's role in shaping the research and the knowledge generated; • If relevant, considering what other researchers, such as those working with the same participant community, using the same practices of inquiry, etc, might learn from your study (both the doing of the study, and the analysis produced); • Using *qualitative* conceptions of generalisability (e.g., Smith 2018).	• Lack of generalisability framed as a weakness through implicitly conceptualising this concept as statistical generalisability; • Researcher bias/influence (as contamination/threat to objectivity) noted as a limitation.	○ How particular methods and modalities shaped the data generated; ○ How the researcher(s) shaped the data generated; ○ Potential 'transferable' implications of the research.
Researcher reflexivity	• Reflecting on the researcher's role in the research process and practices, including (further) researcher reflexivity, where relevant.	• Providing a 'laundry list' of identity positions, framed as influencing the research; • Evoking the notion of researcher bias/ influence (as contamination/threat to objectivity) – including through idea that researcher *may* have influenced the research.	• Within Big Q, researcher 'influence' is understood as inherent – so it's a question of *how* the research was 'influenced,' not whether. Using 'if' instead of 'how' to discuss influence suggests separation is possible (and perhaps ideal).

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Table 1. (Continued).

Article section or element[2]	Practices to consider, congruent with Big Q approaches (some may be required by journals – e.g., discussion of ethical approval)	Practices to avoid or to avoid defaulting to (without consideration and justification)	Notes for reviewers/editors less familiar with Big Q
Implications for future research, policy and practice, where relevant	• Making evidence-based (where available) suggestions for future research (e.g. provide grounds for other groups potentially having different experiences/views); • Discussing implications for practice and 'actionable' outcomes (Sandelowski and Leeman 2012).	• Providing a 'laundry list' of other groups/communities to research around this issue.	• Since complete-population knowledge and/or uncontextualized generalisability are not the aim in Big Q research, it does not make (inherent) sense to suggest researching the topic within another community/group.

[1]Please note this table does contain some formatting inconsistencies. We did the best we could with page-setting limitations to get the most readable and consistent version possible. As people who care about consistency, we are seeking support to cope with the inconsistencies in the final version of the table.

[2]The section subheadings we use here are not intended as suggested subheadings for journal articles. We have used them to organise/structure the presentation of the BQQRG, to convey the different *elements* of reporting. Although oriented to journal articles, these guidelines are also designed to be useful for other formats, such as theses or dissertations. The elements here, and how they are included (or not), need to be considered in relation to the specific constraints and requirements of any reporting context (e.g., word lengths; potential for supplementary materials; audience; etc.), and balancing these with reporting Big Q Qualitative research in a way that is methodologically congruent and reflexively open. See Riley (2023) for some good suggestions on Big Q reporting.

[3]Etc. is used here to signal other possibilities, and that this list isn't exhaustive.

[4]We use etc. when using the first term from a list of alternatives as a shorthand rather than repeating the whole list every time.

[5]Researcher personal positioning should only be shared if the researcher is comfortable/feels safe doing so. Information about researcher positioning can be aggregated across a research team to protect the privacy of individual researchers.

[6]A narrative style may be useful to report demographic or other characteristics of participants in some research; a summary table may be more useful in other contexts.

[7]To avoid repeating this list, we use patterns (etc.) in the rest of the table.

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Disclosure statement

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