

Peer Review

Review of: "Solving the Chaos of Qualitative Research Varieties"

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This article has merit, but is unfortunately undermined by its foundational claim that the current state of qualitative methods is “a mess”, in need of clarification and simplification. In making this claim, the article reinforces a positivist perspective of qualitative research that does not seem to have been questioned by the author. If this positivist stance is held intentionally, I’d suggest that the paper would be stronger if it made that fact eminently clear, as such a stance is not *inherently* invalid. However, if this stance is instead held due to a lack of awareness of other research paradigms beyond positivism, I believe the author would be well served by a thorough investigation of such paradigms. The knowledge gained through this investigation would greatly strengthen the claims made in the paper – and I’m afraid may even call into question its necessity entirely.

Principally, an appreciation for paradigms beyond positivism (which are widespread and held in high regard within qualitative research circles) would paint what the author reads as chaos or mess in the categorization of qualitative methods and methodologies as simple *differences*, informed by the different paradigms and life experiences of the qualitative researchers who propose them, and providing richness to the field of qualitative research. Many perspectives within qualitative research (including my own) would argue that such a variety of frameworks or categorizations, while inconsistent in the author’s eyes, should actually be judged on a reader-by-reader basis – with, for example, framework A being more useful to reader A, while framework B is more useful for reader B. From this perspective, which represents a very common way of determining quality within qualitative research, the variety of frameworks of qualitative research would be seen as a *strength*, rather than a weakness.

If the author is interested in learning about these other research paradigms, I’ve published a paper that addresses many of these topics, which is written in a way that’s intended to be intuitive to a positivist researcher. That paper can be found [here](#). I would also recommend reading a number of other absolutely

excellent introductory works on this topic, which greatly helped me in my own journey into the world of qualitative methods, including Bhattacharya's 2017 [textbook](#) (which includes many relevant chapters, of which 1 and 2 are perhaps the most relevant to this paper), Locke's 2019 [chapter](#), Nazir's 2016 [paper](#), and Tracy's 2010 [paper](#).

Beyond this foundational issue, I find the tone of this article somewhat too colloquial, and feel that it reads, at times, as a touch derogatory to the many excellent works which have covered this topic previously. Examples of the phrases I'm referencing include: "For some reason", "Or are they, really?", and "the whole mess".

I would also point out that long passages of this paper are written without making reference to any published research, even though a vast amount of highly relevant research exists. A discussion of this corpus of literature would greatly strengthen the paper.

Finally, it is unclear where the definitions proposed in this paper are drawn from, and through what process they, and the overarching FORIS framework, were created. Given that this is the central contribution of the paper, this is an important shortcoming, especially as many of these definitions, from my experience, do not reflect their counterparts in the existing literature. If this departure is intentional, it should be more clearly justified.

While the FORIS framework offers a potentially interesting contribution to the literature, I'm afraid that in its current form, I cannot recommend this paper for publication. Having said that, if the changes proposed above are made, and the author engages in a thorough reflection on their work's place in the literature, as well as the ways that their own philosophy of research fits into the wider body of discussion around qualitative methods, then my position is open to change.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.