Phronetic Iterative Qualitative Data Analysis in Organizational Communication Research

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Phronetic Iterative Qualitative Data Analysis (PIQDA) was developed by first author Sarah Tracy over 30 years of practicing and theorizing qualitative research. Ethnographer and critical communication scholar Bryan Taylor introduced Sarah to qualitative research methods. His approach at the time focused on ethnography, grounded analysis, and collecting field data through participant observation and interviewing (Lindlof & Taylor, 1995). Interestingly, little was made about the distinction between "methodology" and "method." Areas of concern such as phenomenology, narrative, ethnomethodology, and participatory action research were cast as approaches that could sensitize the emerging qualitative research for various audiences—rather than as methodologies that structure data collection and analysis choices from beginning to end. Indeed, those first editions of Lindlof and Taylor (1995, 2002) did not even include the word "methodology" in the index.

As such, it is of little surprise that students learning from Lindlof and Taylor infrequently held tightly to a specific methodology for guiding qualitative analytic choices—but instead regarded case study, narrative, and grounded approaches to research as toolboxes that may loosely guide a study. In the 1990s, much qualitative organizational communication research employed coding and analysis techniques that borrowed from, but did not adhere strictly to, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory. Many of these studies were influenced by theoretical frameworks, such as identity and identification, sensemaking, and structuration.

Likewise, rather than holding on to assumptions of methodologies in a purist fashion, Sarah typically began research projects by identifying a specific problem—something recommended by Stanley Deetz, her doctoral advisor and organizational communication critical scholar. Beginning with a problem created a built-in rationale, answered the "so what" question, and aligned with her

mentorship in relation to grounded practical theory (Craig & Tracy, 1995, 2021)—an approach that centers normative analysis of the ways people manage and communicate about communicative problems, tensions, and dilemmas. Over time, Sarah was also influenced by Flyvbjerg's (2001) *Making Social Science Matter* and seized on notions of phronesis and practical wisdom (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). Together, this brief history helps elucidate the path toward PIQDA—the guiding framework that is developed and elucidated in Tracy's (2013, 2020) two editions of *Qualitative Research Methods* and multiple articles on qualitative research practice (e.g., Tracy, 2007, 2012, 2014, 2018; Tracy & Donovan, 2018; Tracy et al., 2015; Tracy & Geist-Martin, 2014; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017; Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016).

In this chapter, we explain the grounding principles of PIQDA as an umbrella analysis approach that is particularly valuable for organizational communication studies. In doing so, we discuss PIQDA as a methodology and compare it to other analysis approaches, such as grounded theory, thematic analysis, the Gioia methodology (Gioia et al., 2013), and Fairhurst and Putnam's (2019) integrative methodology (see Chapter 28 in this volume). Second, we turn to critical issues and questions about enacting PIQDA in practice, including research design (see also Chapter 14 in this volume) and focus, coding, quality and ethical concerns, and techniques for focusing the analysis. Third, we provide an examination of three dominant ways that PIQDA has been adopted in organizational communication studies. We close the chapter with future directions for PIQDA in organizational communication research.

PIQDA AS METHODOLOGY

Common examples of qualitative methodology include schools of thought like phenomenology, ethnography, narrative, case study, or grounded theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Sarah did not set out to create a methodology when she first began practicing and writing about qualitative research and we have reservations about calling PIQDA a methodology, because doing so may inadvertently foreclose one of its most useful characteristics: being adaptable to the question and problem at hand without being sedimented to a specific lineage of literature, theory, or research approach. PIQDA grew (and will continue to grow) from considering a variety of qualitative approaches—in disciplines including communication, management, sociology, health sciences, humanities, and education—and then aiming to create an approach that works for people whether or not they have deep knowledge of a specific methodology or literature.

As PIQDA has been written about, synthesized, and made more coherent, it has nonetheless begun to define philosophical underpinnings, assumptions, and justifications that influence a study's overall foci—all of these being characteristics of what equates with a methodology (Schensul, 2012). PIQDA provides a process for qualitative data collection and analysis that will result in *phronesis*—an ancient Greek word that refers to "prudence" or "practical wisdom" (Aristotle, 2004). Phronesis is distinct from scientific (*episteme*) and technical (*techne*) reasoning. As a context-bound, localized, and particular (not universal) form of practical reasoning, phronesis is concerned with the possible consequences of probable actions in a scene of contingent constraints. This approach is distinct from scientific research aimed at creating rule-like theories and a singular "true" version of reality. In contrast, phronesis is concerned with "practical contextual knowledge and is carried out with an aim toward social commentary, action, and transformation" (Tracy, 2020, p. 24). Furthermore, phronesis requires experience of a given context,

which then leads to prudential considerations regarding possible courses of action.

Social science, especially qualitative social science, has the potential to result in phronesis (Flyvbjerg, 2001) due to its attention to contextual and experiential power issues. Social action is always in transformation; therefore, situated explanations are integral to ongoing sensemaking and practical wisdom. Qualitative research provides access to sensemaking in motion, illuminating how perception is intertwined with researcher subjectivity and examining how sedimented power relations and historical issues precede and influence individual behaviors and intentions (Cairns & Śliwa, 2008; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). A phronetic approach to qualitative research is especially valuable for examining how identities (of the researcher and researched) are discursively constructed and the ways that power and privilege shape values in context (e.g., see Flyvbjerg et al., 2012).

PIQDA, then, aspires to leave the reader wiser and more prudent in terms of acting in relation to contextual value-laden issues. What does this mean, practically speaking? Slightly rewording Schwartz and Sharpe (2010, pp. 25–26), a wise person:

1 knows the proper aims of the activities they are involved in, and wants to serve those they are working with;
2 knows how to improvise: balancing conflicting aims and interpreting rules and principles in light of particularities;
3 is perceptive: knows how to read a social context and moves beyond thinking there is only one possible solution—identifies the range of possibilities in a situation;
4 knows how to adopt the perspective of another; strives to see the situation as another person does and feel what another person feels; empathically makes decisions to meet the needs of the other;
5 knows how to make emotion an ally of reason— to rely on emotion to signal what a situation calls for and to inform judgment without distorting it;

can feel what is the right thing to do, being able to act quickly when required;
6 is an experienced person—practical wisdom is a craft and people become virtuosos in their craft through experience and by having the right experiences.

PIQDA incorporates these goals in a variety of ways; for example, by advocating for substantial engagement with a context or group of participants (e.g., Ban, 2017), or by emphasizing the importance of showing and not just telling (e.g., Kingsford et al., 2021), self-reflexively considering embodied research signals (e.g., Jones, 2020), and learning by doing (e.g., Dutta, 2018).

In accordance with this PIQDA methodology, PIQDA methods logically include participant observation/participant witnessing (Tracy, 2020), considering participants' viewpoint in identifying the research focus, and abductive reasoning that oscillates back and forth between the emergent data and the guiding theories, research questions, and sensitizing concepts. In a section below about enacting PIQDA, we review a number of these methods. Before we do so, let us consider how it compares to several other popular analysis approaches.

SITUATING PIQDA IN RELATION TO OTHER QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

In contrast to approaches like phenomenology (Vagle, 2014; see Chapter 5 in this volume), ethnography of communication (Carbaugh, 2015; see Chapter 11 in this volume), postcolonial qualitative inquiry (Bhattacharya, 2018; see Chapter 9 in this volume), and narrative inquiry (Lawler, 2002; see Chapter 21 in this volume), PIQDA does not require a specific corpus of theoretical knowledge before study design. In this regard, it is similar to thematic

analysis (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Without being tied to a specific body of theory, PIQDA is appropriate not only for scholars, but also for beginners, professionals conducting industry research, and students across disciplines. PIQDA's success is defined by workability: Has PIQDA's process and outcome met the needs and concerns of the relevant parties (e.g., the readers, the participants, the person conducting the qualitative study)? Unfortunately, many people who benefit from qualitative research do not have the luxury to immerse themselves in a certain body of theory and a question that plagues many people who are unfamiliar with qualitative methods is: Am I doing it right? An obsession with this question constrains creativity and working through the messiness that inevitably marks qualitative research. If PIQDA sheds light on a problem and creates findings that provide practical wisdom and "workability," for instance by providing use-inspired guidance on social action, then PIQDA is a success. Like any craft or practice, people will learn PIQDA less by reading about it and more by taking the metaphorical plunge (ideally with a mentor) and getting their hands and feet wet in the process (Tracy, 2007).

Although adherence to a certain school of thought is not required for PIQDA, the approach encourages the use of extant academic literature to inform the study at hand. PIQDA is an umbrella approach, in that you could start with research design and data collection and learn a body of theory simultaneously. For example, perhaps a researcher jumps into fieldwork, is introduced to the phenomenology literature three months later, and then begins to examine the field notes by paying close attention to experience—perhaps even conducting an autoethnography to explore one's own similar experience (see Chapter 12 in this volume). The researcher might also learn about and incorporate a specific literature (e.g., on the concept of *organizational identification*) and use those

concepts to help guide the study's focus (see Endacott & Myers, 2019).

This incorporation and welcoming of existing literature and theory differentiates PIQDA from purely inductive renditions of grounded theory that advocated that researchers enter the scene as a blank slate and avoid reading literature until most of the data were collected and analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Instead, PIQDA adopts an iterative approach—a reflexive process that oscillates back and forth between these two areas: (1) guiding literature, research questions, theory, and sensitizing concepts, and (2) qualitative data's emergent notions, concepts, themes, and surprises. The researcher visits and revisits the data, links emerging insights to established literature, and progressively refines the study's area of focus. These are the basic questions guiding an iterative analysis: (1) What are the data telling me? (2) What is it I want to know? (3) What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know? (see Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 78).

This iterative approach resonates with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and more recent constructivist versions of grounded theory (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Indeed, the funnel metaphor (Tracy, 2020) is emblematic of PIQDA: One enters the research design with a guiding research question or problem, casts a wide net with a child-like curiosity, asks how the emergent data speak to or suggest a modified research direction, revises the research approach, considers additional former literature or a priori research concerns, and re-enters data collection and analysis with a narrowed attention. This iterative process is depicted in Figure 20.1.

Rather than telling a story of the entire range of events, activities, participants, or relationships evident in the data (expected in many grounded theory, ethnographic, and thematic analysis approaches), PIQDA is successful when it answers a specific research question (or two, or three, or five),
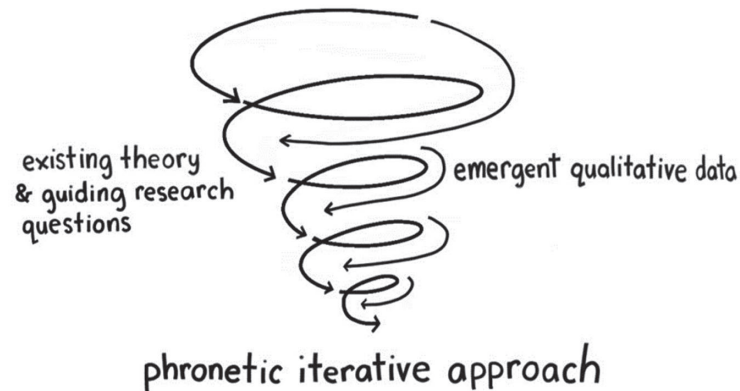
Figure 20.1   A Phronetic Iterative Approach Alternates Between Considering Existing Theories/Research Questions and Emergent Qualitative Data.
Source: Sarah J. Tracy, commissioned from artist Sally Campbell Pirie.

and does so in a way that creates practical wisdom for the focal audiences. A phronetic approach would suggest that good *initial* research questions include: (1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains, and who loses? (3) Is this development desirable? (4) What should be done? (Flyvbjerg, 2001). As they proceed with the study, researchers devise more specific research questions, such as: "How do administrators of color negotiate their co-cultural group and dominant group memberships within a predominately White institution of higher education?" (Razzante, 2018, p. 341).

Readers may also wonder how PIQDA compares to other well-known qualitative methodologies in organizational studies, such as Fairhurst and Putnam's (2019) integrative methodology (see Chapter 28 in this volume) or Gioia et al.'s (2013, 2022) grounded methodology. Like Fairhurst and Putnam's (2019) integrative methodology, PIQDA examines emergent data in relation to larger discourses. However, Fairhurst and Putnam's (2019) methodology focuses primarily on combining little "d" and big "D" discourse orientations to analyze organizational oppositions. Moreover, like Gioia et al.'s (2013, 2022) grounded methodology, PIQDA assumes that organizing is a socially

constructed process and that researchers should pay attention to participant-generated meanings and researcher-generated analytic insights. What's more, all these approaches are interested in generating plausible understandings of phenomena, rather than a single right answer. PIQDA differs from the Gioia methodology, though, in that it may or may not result in a grounded explanation. In addition, PIQDA is not focused on creating a conceptual model that differentiates participants' "first-order" understandings from "second-order" researcher interpretations. Gioia's approach has come under attack for being applied as a formulaic template (e.g., Mees-Buss et al., 2022; Pratt et al., 2022). In contrast, PIQDA aims to provide a map for conducting and analyzing qualitative research, while remaining open to a *bricolage* of research representations, which may take the form of rich exemplars, artistic representations, autoethnographic storytelling, conceptual models, and detailed textual analyses. Furthermore, given its original home in the field of communication, studies employing PIQDA typically include verbatim excerpts from a range of empirical materials, such as interviews, field notes, artifacts, art, online materials and more, whereas the Gioia methodology primarily focuses on interviews to

synthesize first-order concepts (summaries of interview content) and second-order interpretive themes.

CRITICAL ISSUES AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ENACTING PIQDA RESEARCH

We now turn PIQDA as an actionable practice. The information provided in this section is abbreviated, given space limitations. Interested readers are encouraged to consider more detailed discussions (see Tracy, 2018, 2020)—as mentioned, PIQDA is not a template or methodological "recipe." In what follows, we discuss critical issues, ethical concerns, and questions about doing PIQDA research, particularly related to (1) research design and focus; (2) primary and secondary cycle coding with first-level and second-level codes; (3) practices for creating quality; and (4) interpretive ways to focus the analysis.

Research Design and Focus

PIQDA's research design typically begins by identifying a problem, curiosity, dilemma, issue of concern, or interest. This problem may emerge in (1) the context of study, such as asking whether the concept of *compassion* or *burnout* may better elucidate the emotional highs and lows of hospice workers (Way & Tracy, 2012); (2) a population, such as wildland firefighters who operate based on codified safety rules from earlier fatalities and need stronger safety rules and work team models (Jahn, 2016); or (3) an academic literature, such as Kingsford et al. (2021) who explored resilience theories and expanded them by analyzing the experiences of welfare recipients.

Whether this problem is identified in a specific context, population, or literature, it is not merely a *hypothetical* problem; rather, it is grounded in space and time—you could write a documentary movie script that showed the problem or issue in action, with a plot line, characters, script, artifacts, props, and a scene. For instance, researchers may observe circus performers in their front and backstage environments (Martinez, 2022). Depending on what they observe, they may then choose to focus on how these performers are socialized to manage pain to become successful in their performances. Other researchers—especially those who aim to extend a specific line of scholarship or are motivated by professional goals—will more likely begin with a specific problem that has been identified in past literature or that emerged within their organization. For example, researchers may find that the concept of compassion has primarily been theorized on a relational level, which does not fully capture the organizational experience of healthcare workers. This may lead them to theorize compassion on a structural level (Leach, 2022).

Next, the researcher collects data through qualitative means of interviewing, observation, gathering textual or artistic materials, and so on. PIQDA's data collection practices are very similar to many other qualitative approaches (see Ellingson, 2017; Tracy, 2020). Throughout, researchers should pay attention to procedural ethics as are required by institutional boards as well as situational ethics that are particular to the context, such as whether consent should be generated at the individual, group, or organizational level.

Preparing and organizing the data is a cyclical, iterative, and analytic process. Related activities include repeatedly reviewing empirical materials through reading and listening, writing analytic asides, and organizing the data into larger categories. The data could be further organized in terms of chronology (all the data from 2021 here, all of it from 2022 there), source demographics (all materials from Millennials here, all from Gen X there), contexts (all data from workplace 1 here, from workplace 2 there), or type (all field notes here, all interview transcripts there). During this organization phase, it is useful for researchers to reflect

on the ways they process information. Some people like notebooks while others prefer specialized qualitative data analysis software (for an overview, see Silver & Lewins, 2014).

The organization of data is a key part of the analytic process. Chronological ordering has the benefit of displaying change over time, correlation, and influence. Dividing data based on demographics encourages comparisons across groups. Separating field notes from interviews may trigger an interesting crystallization (Ellingson, 2008) that illuminates how participants *say* one thing and *do* another thing. We encourage researchers to be mindful and intentional, in this regard, as organization choices that may seem trivial in the beginning can affect a study's results in significant ways.

Primary and Secondary Cycle Coding with First-Level and Second-Level Codes

PIQDA suggests that researchers analyze their data as they gather it, but then engage in a period of focused analysis when they have completed about two-thirds of their data collection. One way to envision the coding process is by using a cooking metaphor (see Tracy, 2020). Imagine that your data are a buffet with all kinds of food. Although all this food is mouthwatering, it is way too much for a person to digest in a single sitting. The PIQDA researcher's job is to identify the key ingredients from this delicious spread—ingredients they will use to create a perfect new "dish" (a research article, report, book) that meets the needs and interests of the key audience. Coding is a tool that facilitates this process.

PIQDA uses the term "code" to refer to the way researchers identify a word or phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). Coding unfolds

chronologically, first in primary cycles that focus on the emergent meanings in the data, and then in secondary cycles that focus on synthesizing the data and incorporating concepts that could only be known through theorizing based on the literature (Tracy, 2020).

Primary cycle coding begins with what grounded theory scholars have called "open coding" or "line-by-line coding" (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During this process, researchers consider specific questions or domains. For example, they may take note of behaviors, rituals, characters, contexts, rules, or time periods (Tracy, 2020). During primary cycle coding, it is important to be curious and remain open to multiple meanings. This is a time to delight in surprises and new discoveries in the data. For such detailed open coding, Tracy (2018) generally recommends that researchers choose about 20% of the data that illustrate a maximum variation of information available in the empirical materials.

To code, researchers can highlight a portion of the data (e.g., transcripts, field notes, news articles, visual materials) and then write the code—a word or short phrase—in longhand in the margin or a comment in Microsoft Word. Alternatively, the code may be entered in data analysis software, such as NVivo. The more detailed researchers are in this process, the more fine-grained their understanding in terms of the data's main ingredients. However, there is no set rule as to whether to first "lump" data into larger categories or to "fracture" data into smaller slices that may be reintegrated down the line (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

No matter how detailed, codes in this primary cycle should be quite simple, obvious, and empirical—sticking primarily to what Tracy (2020) calls *first-level codes*, which are descriptive (they describe who, what, where, when) and are identifiable, even without specialized expertise. Moreover, it is valuable to use gerunds (words ending in "-ing") to capture action (Charmaz et al., 2018). First-level codes may also be the exact words or phrases

employed by participants (*in vivo codes*, see Strauss, 1987).

Assigning first-level codes simplifies the data buffet, so to speak, which is crucial for assessing the empirical aspects of the study before moving toward theorizing and conceptualizing. One of the most common mistakes in qualitative analysis is trying to create complex conceptual coding labels too quickly. A sound analysis benefits from patiently lingering in the intelligibility of first-level coding. We encourage you to wait for secondary cycle coding to engage theory in earnest—something we describe next.

After completing the primary cycle coding, researchers continue with *secondary cycle coding* (Tracy, 2020). During this part of the analysis, researchers begin to integrate theory and synthesize first-level codes. Rather than simply examining the data for key descriptive ingredients, they search for *second-level codes* (Tracy, 2020), which are sometimes referred to as "themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021; Gioia et al., 2013; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). One heuristic for having found a second-level code is attempting to answer the question, "What is this expression an example of?" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). For instance, Martinez (2022) began noticing a difference in the ways circus performers related to pain depending on their context and audience. Over time, and pulling from Goffman's (1959) sociological theories, a code of "backstage behavior" encapsulated data (interview excerpts and photos) that captured a key theme in the data.

During secondary cycle coding, it is especially useful to talk with other scholars and return to the literature. For example, when first author Sarah and her colleague Tim were analyzing an audio-recorded conversation of a would-be school shooter and front-office employee (Tracy & Huffman, 2017), they first coded a series of talk turns as "conversational mirroring." This first-level descriptive code was simple—identifying instances when one speaker repeated verbatim the words and intonation of the other speaker. However, in secondary cycle coding, the authors wanted to understand the *impact* of such a conversational move. While reading the literature, they came across concepts of *communication accommodation* (Soliz & Giles, 2014) and *communication entrainment* (McGrath & Kelly, 1986), which became second-level theoretical codes in their study. These codes helped elucidate why such a conversational move had a calming effect on the would-be school shooter.

In secondary cycle coding, researchers also begin to lump together multiple fractured codes—often referred to as *axial coding* (Charmaz, 2014) or *hierarchical coding* (Tracy, 2020). For example, in a study of how travelers interact with U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers, third author Marco, grouped together the first-level codes of "hiding information" and "ignoring hostile behavior" under the second-level code of "survival strategies" (see Dehnert, 2021). During secondary cycle coding, researchers may also link behaviors that co-occur. For example, in an interview study, Tracy and Rivera (2010) found that male executives showed an uptick in verbal disfluencies when speaking about work–life balance solutions. After researching the causes of verbal disfluencies and considering how the interview questions prompted participants to articulate new ideas for the first time, the authors identified that structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) would help explain the scripts that govern work–life concerns for the executives. This turn was a direct result of the abductive and iterative analysis processes that define PIQDA.

The next step in PIQDA is to develop a codebook, which at minimum includes the names of the codes and their definition (for examples, see Tracy, 2018, 2020). Unlike a traditional grounded analysis that aims to explain the entire data set using open coding, PIQDA uses research questions to decide whether a code should be included in the codebook. Interesting codes that relate to questions that are not the focus of the study

may be discussed in terms of promising directions for future research. The codebook goes through multiple iterations and is eventually laid deductively on top of the rest of the data. Of course, if a new or unexpected code emerges that relates to the study focus, the researcher should incorporate it into the codebook and reexamine the data set to see how it connects. Revising the codebook in this way maintains the integrity of the codebook via iteration with emergent qualitative data.

Creating Quality in PIQDA

Quality standards in PIQDA are flexible and expansive. Tracy's (2010) "big tent" model distinguishes eight end goals that characterize high quality qualitative research and differentiates these from the various mean practices, or techniques, that researchers take up to achieve the end goal. These goals include: (1) worthy topic; (2) rich rigor; (3) sincerity; (4) credibility; (5) resonance; (6) significant contribution; (7) thoughtful ethical considerations; and (8) meaningful coherence. Several articles, chapters, and encyclopedia entries have described this model of quality in depth, and also provided extensions and critiques (e.g., see Leach et al., 2023; López & Tracy, 2020). The model has also been misinterpreted when readers overlook the fundamental distinction that the practices for reaching these eight end goals of research quality depend on the study's paradigmatic and axiological assumptions.

For example, researchers who adopt a postpositivist approach often use intercoder agreement practices to provide an avenue for enhancing the end goal of credibility. Intercoder reliability—something that can be addressed in a number of ways (Tracy, 2020)—is a valuable practice when a research team is claiming to represent a reality that others would be able to recognize and replicate. Such was the case in a research study comparing the efficacy of one type of leadership course compared to another (Adame et al., 2021). Based upon qualitative coding of role-play scenarios, the researchers claimed that several specific leadership behaviors were more prevalent among students in one class than the other. Such a claim benefits from the fact that multiple researchers identified and agreed that a certain piece of data aligned with a specific code.

In analyses engaging critical, interpretive, or postmodern/post-structural postqualitative questions, a practice for reaching the end goals of credibility, rich rigor, and ethics comes through sharing emerging findings with participants—something Tracy (2020) calls *member reflections*. In carrying out this practice, researchers share, listen, and learn from participants' responses—and consider how their feedback may shape and guide the research. It is less about ensuring that the researcher has it "right" and more about considering how participants' reactions (whether positive, negative, or indifferent) provide another viewpoint. For example, during Way and Malvini Redden's (2020) member reflections in a study of working-class youths' social media use, the teens challenged the researchers' initial interpretations, which in turn triggered the researchers to refocus their analysis on social media impression and privacy management.

Another common quality end goal is for research to resonate beyond the specific study to other contexts. People who are not familiar with qualitative methods often refer to *generalization*, but this term begets inappropriate positivist notions of statistical generalizability and prediction. Instead, Tracy (2010) uses the term *resonance* to refer to research that influences, affects, or moves the audience in a variety of ways. Said another way, does the research provide an avenue for readers to better make sense of a phenomenon in their own lives outside of the specific research context at hand? Two mean (in process) practices for creating the end goal of resonance are *aesthetic writing* and *thick description*

(Geertz, 1973). Of course, researchers can also make their research more likely to resonate when they not only show, but also tell about the ways that their research is transferable to other contexts. Given PIQDA's essence of practical wisdom that addresses problems people grapple with, specifying a study's *transferability* is an ethical move as well (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is where several practices related to focusing the analysis can also help.

PIQDA Focusing Activities

PIQDA benefits from a number of synthesizing and theorizing activities. For instance, claim-making is a key analytic art between coding and interpretation, and, unfortunately, is often glossed in research methods training. Huffman and Tracy (2018) elucidate a range of claim-making heuristics that help ensure that qualitative research resonates beyond the study at hand. Here, we review several important heuristics.

Weick's (2001) adage of "How can I know what I think until I see what I say" is a guiding tenet of qualitative inquiry in so much that writing is not just a method of representation, but also is a method of inquiry (p. 189; see also Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). For example, writing *analytic memos* (Charmaz, 2014) prompts researchers to think carefully and develop codes by informally writing about their parameters, examples, consequences, and a code's relationship to other codes. As Saldaña (2016) would say, analytic memos are places to metaphorically "dump your brain" (p. 44). Analytic memos also provide spaces to begin making claims or statements regarding phenomena that could be substantiated, extended, or critiqued in future research. For example, consider the difference in resonance between these two sentences: (1) "This study suggests the importance of future research on transgender identities in the workplace"; and (2) "Formally educating our workplaces on

queer histories is critical to ensure that trans* employees' well-being is not a casualty of poor planning or backlash" (Jones, 2020, p. 271). The first statement is a good, yet very vague idea. The second statement is a claim. And, as a claim, the second one has a basis to be further studied in the future, amplifying the resonance of the study.

Claims can be made even more impactful when the researchers place parameters or borders around them. Parameter setting (Keyton et al., 2009) uses the structure of a claim plus the addition of *especially when*, or *except when*. Using the above example (Jones, 2020), the claim could be made even more powerful with a parameter such as: Formally educating our workplaces on queer histories is critical to ensure trans*[1] employees' well-being *especially* when organizational leaders are unfamiliar with gender nonconforming concerns. Arriving at such a specific claim would first require the PIQDA researcher to creatively think through their data, consider how emergent codes work together, and put boundaries among the emergent claims. Parameters are also an ethical practice for ensuring that claims made do not overreach or exaggerate the impact of findings.

Another activity to focus PIQDA is creating a *loose analysis outline* (Tracy, 2020) that briefly overviews the content of research findings. Writing from a loose analysis outline is less unwieldy than trying to write straight from a codebook or even from a series of analytic memos. Researchers should begin with a short statement of their research questions, choose codes and analytic memo claims, and then rewrite them in a sentence form that connects with and serves to answer the research questions. Not all codes will be included in this outline. And the researcher can valuably place material on actual or digital Post-it Notes so that they can play iteratively with their ordering. The goal is to provide an outline—based upon the analytic activities thus far—of the emerging findings section in a small space. Doing so will point out places where additional data could be

valuably gathered, synthesized, and coded and will serve as a framework for the larger paper. Now that we have reviewed PIQDA, we next turn to key ways that PIQDA has emerged in contemporary organizational communication literature.

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES USING ITERATIVE ANALYSIS APPROACHES

In order to explore how PIQDA approaches to qualitative data analysis are used in organizational communication scholarship, we conducted a systematic search of articles published in *Management Communication Quarterly* as well as International Communication Association (ICA) and (U.S.) National Communication Association (NCA) journals between 2010 and 2020. We searched for the word "iterative" in a database of these journals, which produced 331 articles. We searched using the word "iterative," rather than PIQDA, because it cast a larger umbrella, and because the name of Tracy's (2013, 2018, 2020) analysis approach has evolved over time across multiple publications (e.g., Tracy used "pragmatic" iterative analysis in her 2013 edition of the textbook, p. 184). Furthermore, we were interested to know how organizational communication scholars are using a key element of PIQDA (iteration), rather than how they are labeling it. As is evident in the preceding discussion, PIQDA incorporates, overlaps with, and extends techniques from a variety of abductive and iterative approaches. Articles that used the word "iterative" outside the context of qualitative research or focus of organizational communication were eliminated, given the scope of this chapter. The remaining 161 articles were imported into NVivo. Then a text query was deployed using NVivo qualitative software searching for the word "iterative" and all of its stem words (i.e., iterative, iteration, iterate, etc.).

The broad context setting within NVivo was employed for the text query, which provides a full paragraph (rather than one phrase) each time a stem-word of the word "iterative" appeared. This provided a dataset that was analyzed to see how qualitative organizational communication scholars incorporate iterative approaches into their research.

Our analysis reveals that qualitative organizational communication scholars use iterative approaches in three dominant ways: (1) iteration between data analysis and existing literature/synthesizing concepts/theories; (2) iteration as a form of coding that is executed abductively; and (3) iteration between data collection and data analysis. Each approach is reviewed below and examples are shared. The first approach is directly in alignment with the PIQDA tradition and often cites Tracy's scholarship. The second approach, iterative forms of coding, draws from the PIQDA tradition, but it is often combined with other forms of iteration, typically from the grounded traditions referencing constant comparative coding. The coding processes in PIQDA and constant comparative approaches are compatible in that there are multiple rounds of coding and synthesis. Hence, it is unsurprising that we find manuscripts that reference both iterative coding from PIQDA proper and constant comparative coding in tandem with one another. The final approach, iterating between data collection and analysis, aligns with PIQDA's assumptions, yet most scholars using this type of iteration cite grounded theory rather than PIQDA. Scholars use these approaches in a wide variety of articles published across the discipline of organizational communication. Please note that in many of the examples cited below, scholars reference Tracy (2013), which is the first edition of Tracy's (2020) edition of *Qualitative Research Methods*. The second edition (Tracy, 2020), especially Chapter 9, differentiates PIQDA from other qualitative approaches. Please also note that many people cite these books as being published a year earlier (2012 for 2013 and 2019

for 2020), ostensibly because they used a pre-publication version.

Iteration Between Data Analysis and Existing Literature

The first way scholars use an iterative approach is by moving between their data and a priori literature, theories, or sensitizing concepts. This form of iterative analysis is aligned with PIQDA. For instance, Anderson (2020) described her analytical approach as follows in her quasi-ethnographic study of aging in place:

> I completed a thematic approach to data analysis…This approach seeks to identify themes or recurring patterns in qualitative data, such as observations, interviews, and personal reflections. It is a flexible process that involved moving iteratively between the theory, context, and data (Tracy, 2019). (p. 365)

Anderson first calls her analysis "thematic," but then cites Tracy's iterative approach as moving between "theory, context, and data" (p. 365).

Similarly, Ban's (2017) study of tensions and identities in Chinese house churches "used an iterative approach (Tracy, 2012) which allowed me to travel between 'emic, or emergent, readings of the data' and an 'etic use of existing models, explanations and theories' (p. 384)" (pp. 239–240).

Others incorporated computer-assisted analysis as part of their iterative analysis, such as Kim et al. (2019), who described the qualitative portion of their multi-study article on organizational awareness among a dispersed workforce as follows:

> All interviews were transcribed verbatim; in turn, transcripts were imported into Atlas.ti for analysis. The data were analyzed using a practical iterative approach (Tracy, 2013). An iterative analysis alternates between emic reading of the data (e.g., emerging themes that reveal new patterns of task awareness) and an etic use of existing models and theories (e.g. prior literatures on

task awareness and our own findings from Study 2). The practical iterative approach allows researchers to pay attention to both emergent findings and currently active interests, priorities, and salient frameworks and theories.…The practical iterative approach provides an ideal fit for this study because it enables us to emphasize our focus on task awareness throughout the analysis and identify new forms of task awareness triggered by emerging communicative practice among dispersed workers. (p. 57)

These are just a few of the many studies we found (e.g., see Bruscella & Bisel, 2018; Compton & Dougherty, 2017; Cooper & Mitra, 2018; Dutta, 2018) that use this approach to iteration in their analysis, alternating between existing knowledge and the study's localized qualitative data.

Iteration Between Coding Strategies

Our analysis suggests that a second popular way that iterative approaches are utilized in qualitative organizational communication research is for coding purposes. These studies described an abductive, back and forth process between different kinds of data during the initial analysis. Iteration in coding (i.e., moving back and forth between different types of data) is distinct from the first iterative approach discussed in the previous section. For instance, Canary and colleagues (2017) described their coding in a research study about a process improvement project at a public institution regarding their conflict of interest procedures as follows:

> We used qualitative thematic analysis to answer Research Questions 1 and 3, engaging in collaborative and iterative coding following principles of the constant comparative method (Tracy, 2013). NVivo qualitative analysis software was used to organize and code qualitative responses from the baseline and follow-up surveys, notes from the policy café meetings, and field notes from the website usability study. (p. 211)

Note that this article cites Tracy's earlier book and uses the language constant comparative method to describe "iterative coding."

Similarly, Jones (2020) combined Tracy's iterative coding with Charmaz's (2011) coding approach to describe their analysis of interview data with trans*[1] employees from a community organization called Trans*Spectrum exploring gender identity, performativities, presentation, agency, and privilege:

> I approached the study as multilayered and iterative by embodying an etic use of sensitizing concepts and theoretical models with an emic relationship to study data. After transcribing and reviewing each interview through processes of data immersion, I utilized primary, secondary, and hierarchical coding processes, including attribute, process, in vivo, concept, and emotion coding (Saldaña, 2016). The first stage of analysis included open-coding 80% of each transcript to describe "what" was happening in the data. Guided by Charmaz (2011), I used gerunds to best capture the essence of action in the data and punctuated these first-level codes with analytic memos. The second stage of analysis included analytic and interpretive revisions that answered "why" data were significant. Finally, I employed hierarchical coding to create "conceptual bins for emergent claims" (S. J. Tracy, 2020, p. 268) and repeated this cycle multiple times to create a codebook with 17 total codes….Using these external assessments of themes' validity, I used the constant comparative method to ensure data were applicable to codes and emerging themes, typologies, and metaphors (Charmaz, 2011). Finally, I organized the data in a loose analysis outline to guide the writing process and evaluate the completeness of analysis.

This excerpt shows a common approach in which scholars use an iterative approach to coding and cite Tracy's scholarship along with additional approaches to qualitative analysis, such as the constant comparative method. Other recent organizational communication studies that use a similar iterative approach to coding are Koschmann's (2016) analysis of collaboration failures and Guntzviller et al.'s (2020) research on advice-giving conversations. By specifically addressing iterative coding practices, these studies couple PIQDA with other compatible analytical techniques.

Iteration Between Data Collection and Data Analysis

The third and least defined way organizational communication scholars use iterative analysis is by moving back and forth between data collection and data analysis. The articles in the corpus we analyzed rarely cited PIQDA or Tracy's qualitative research more generally. Rather, they cited a range of grounded theory approaches (e.g., Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We included this type of iterative analysis because it demonstrates the intellectual diversity regarding iteration in qualitative data analysis. Often, grounded theory is strictly inductive, iterating between data collection and analysis. Further, traditional grounded theory approaches typically do not reference literature or sensitizing concepts until after analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, in Basu's (2011) analysis of marginalized sex workers in India, iteration is described as follows:

> Data collection was conducted in tandem with translating and simultaneously transcribing the audiorecorded conversations. The data was then analyzed for themes. This project's focus on contextually grounded localized articulations on health meant that the grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) would be a viable method of analyzing the narratives. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) write that grounded theory is an iterative process by which understandings of phenomena as experienced on the ground emerge through engagement with the data. (p. 396)

Basu (2011) cites grounded theory as the methodology and describes movement between conducting data collection and engaging with the data analytically.

Similarly, Kroon (2019) described her iterative approach in terms of going back and forth between data collection and analysis in a study of supervisors' communication with aging workers: "Data collection and analyses were alternated in iterative steps. The recruiting of supervisors continued until collecting additional new data no longer resulted in the emergence of new dimensions or explanations (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)" (p. 396). Moreover, Kroon situated her study in the tradition of grounded theory.

In both examples, as well as many others, researchers use "iterative" as descriptive language and employ it methodologically. The oscillation between data collection and analysis mimics similar assumptions tied to iteration from PIQDA as a process, in that interpretation often occurs via abductive reasoning until sense is made between the data and an intellectual stopping point, or "anchor," metaphorically speaking. However, the intellectual anchor in PIQDA differs from the one that is used in grounded theory. In PIQDA, the anchor is often theory, sensitizing concepts, or literature; in grounded theory, the anchor is *saturation* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)—when no new insights emerge from data.

Although it is impossible to know the exact reasons why scholars chose to cite approaches other than PIQDA when coupling data collection and analysis, one explanation could be that PIQDA is typically associated with data analysis (e.g., Tracy, 2018), rather than with data collection. Indeed, there is little that distinguishes data collection in PIQDA from more constructivist grounded theory approaches (e.g., Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). What distinguishes PIQDA from original grounded theory approaches is that, along the way, the PIQDA researcher is encouraged to consider theory, sensitizing concepts, and literature, rather than trying to analyze data purely inductively as a metaphorical tabula rasa or blank slate (Kelle, 2014).

In sum, our analysis revealed three common ways organizational communication scholars are incorporating iteration into their qualitative research. The first way is directly connected to Tracy's (2020) PIQDA: moving between data analysis and existing literature/theory/sensitizing concepts. In this first approach, scholars use iterative efforts to develop and advance their data analysis. In the second approach, scholars use iteration as part of their coding processes. Organizational communication scholars abductively move between data (often multiple types of data) and codes as a way to advance their analysis. Articles using these approaches refer to PIQDA and Tracy's work in tandem with other iterative coding approaches. In the third approach, scholars iterate by moving back and forth between data collection and analysis. In this case, articles do not refer to Tracy's work directly, yet do use "iterative" language and are situated in the tradition of grounded theory.

Furthermore, according to our analysis, *Management Communication Quarterly* published the most qualitative organizational communication research that incorporated some type of iterative approach between 2010 and 2020 ($n = 44$), followed by *Communication Monographs* ($n = 42$) and *Journal of Applied Communication Research* ($n = 42$). Thus, our analysis shows that iterative approaches to qualitative organizational communication research are widely accepted, with PIQDA serving as a common resource for framing processes of qualitative data analysis.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PIQDA IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

In this chapter, we explained the grounding principles of PIQDA as an umbrella approach for qualitative data analysis in organizational

communication research. After offering a brief history of the approach, we situated PIQDA as a translated methodology; that is, as an overarching approach toward qualitative research. As a methodology, PIQDA centers on generating context-driven, pragmatic, problem-based research that aims to answer specific questions with practical wisdom, rather than to create grounded theory from data. Next, we showed how to embody this phronetic spirit in our explanation of how to conduct PIQDA. To conclude, we presented an analysis of how iterative approaches to qualitative data analysis have been used in published organizational communication research.

We are excited to see the breadth and variety of ways that researchers have applied PIQDA to their problem-driven studies that result in context-based answers. Our hope is that PIQDA will also be used increasingly in organizational communication *practice*. That is, we believe that due to its focus on generating localized, problem-driven solutions, PIQDA can provide generative, effective, and applied insights for organizational practitioners across a variety of contexts, be it counseling, professional ethnography, or activist organizations.

One strength of PIQDA is that those looking for potential answers to a given problem need not be experts in academic theory before conducting a study. Rather, they can iteratively move between the context at hand and the literature/theory as they are conducting their research, always being driven by particular questions. Moreover, PIQDA's openness toward the "outcome" of the research process is less constrained, compared to other, related approaches. For example, while thematic analysis focuses on generating themes, the Gioia methodology on developing a conceptual model, and grounded theory on inductive theorizing, the "outcome" of a PIQDA project is open to the needs of the communities and organizations that are studied. This makes PIQDA suitable for application beyond scholarly contexts in which

practitioners are oftentimes constrained by tight deadlines, operate with limited funding, and/or are simply not interested in developing detailed theoretical insights.

Finally, we urge readers—practitioners, scholars, and students alike—*not* to treat PIQDA as a metaphorical cookbook or recipe that needs to be followed step-by-step. As we have shown in this chapter, PIQDA should be regarded as an expansive and translated methodology, rather than a template (see also Mees-Buss et al., 2022; Pratt et al., 2022). Moreover, we urge those interested in exploring PIQDA to "take the plunge" (Tracy, 2007, p. 106) and *just do it*. As noted by Schwartz and Sharpe (2010), citing Aristotle's study of practical wisdom, "People learn how to be brave…by doing brave things. So, too, with honesty, justice, loyalty, caring, listening, and counseling" (p. 26). Likewise, you can only learn PIQDA as a craft in the practice of doing PIQDA. In this regard, we hope that PIQDA will continue to provide anchoring guideposts for the practice of qualitative research in organizational communication.

Note

1 We use the word "trans*" with an asterisk in alignment with the article cited by Jones (2020) to refer to all who are not cisgender, including people who identify as transgender, nonbinary, gender fluid, gender queer, gender nonconforming, or agender. We also recognize that this way of writing is not uncontested, and that writing conventions change.

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