



The
Queen's
Nursing
Institute

Masterclass:

Critically appraising qualitative
research papers

SUMMARY

Tuesday 17 January 2023

1pm - 2pm, via Zoom

#QNIResearch



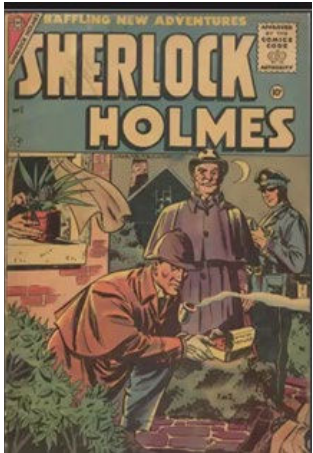
Dr Ben Bowers QN, Community Nursing Research Consultant, The QNI, ben.bowers@qni.org.uk, [@Ben_Bowers_](#)

- Welcome to everyone, a recording of this masterclass will be available shortly
- Brief overview of the forum: it's a national forum for community nurses who are undertaking or considering carrying out research and those keen to be more research aware.
- It aims to strengthen the capacity of community-based nursing research through peer support, mentorship, and supporting personal development and research opportunities.
- Gives us a space to learn about research together,
- There are currently over 440 members across the UK.
- We offer monthly newsletters about research and research activities, webinars, masterclasses, this is the second of 6. There are website resources and we have just launched a mentorship scheme, to help develop your research career.
- To sign up and/or find out more, go to: <https://qni.org.uk/nursing-in-the-community/community-nursing-research-forum/> or scan the QR code right



The free 1-hour masterclass focused on how to approach the critical appraisal of qualitative research papers, with a particular focus on assessing the rigour of methods used, the coherence of findings, and the likely transferability of insights generated.

Dr Jenni Burt, Research Programme Leader and Principal Research Associate at THIS Institute (The Healthcare Improvement Studies Institute), University of Cambridge



- We're all being detectives today, we're being Sherlock Holmes
- What is qualitative research? There are so many different methodological approaches, broadly what joins them together is, '...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them.'
- Qualitative methods include: interviews; focus groups and observations.
- We're not talking about quantitative data, for example: trials, surveys or routine data analysis.



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- Quantitative vs qualitative approaches:

	Quantitative approaches	Qualitative approaches
Purpose	To test hypotheses, look at cause & effect, make predictions	To understand & interpret social interactions
Research objectives	Describe, explain, predict	Explore, discover, construct
Deals with	Numbers and statistics	Words, images, objects
Collects data through	Measuring using structured & validated instruments or routine data	Generating through interviews, focus groups, observations
Sample	Large, randomly selected	Small, not randomly selected
Findings	Generalisable, to apply to other populations	Specialized, less generalisable to others



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- What is critical appraisal?
- There are different approaches to appraisal: 'formal' = for systematic reviews, for peer reviewers, for journal submissions. 'Informal' = when reading a paper, what I will focus on today.
- What I tend to use all the time is informal approaches: 'is this any good to me at all? What kind of standard research is this?'
- Formal approaches: many companies have check lists, very detailed appraisals, for example, see left.



THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE

JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research

Reviewer _____ Date _____

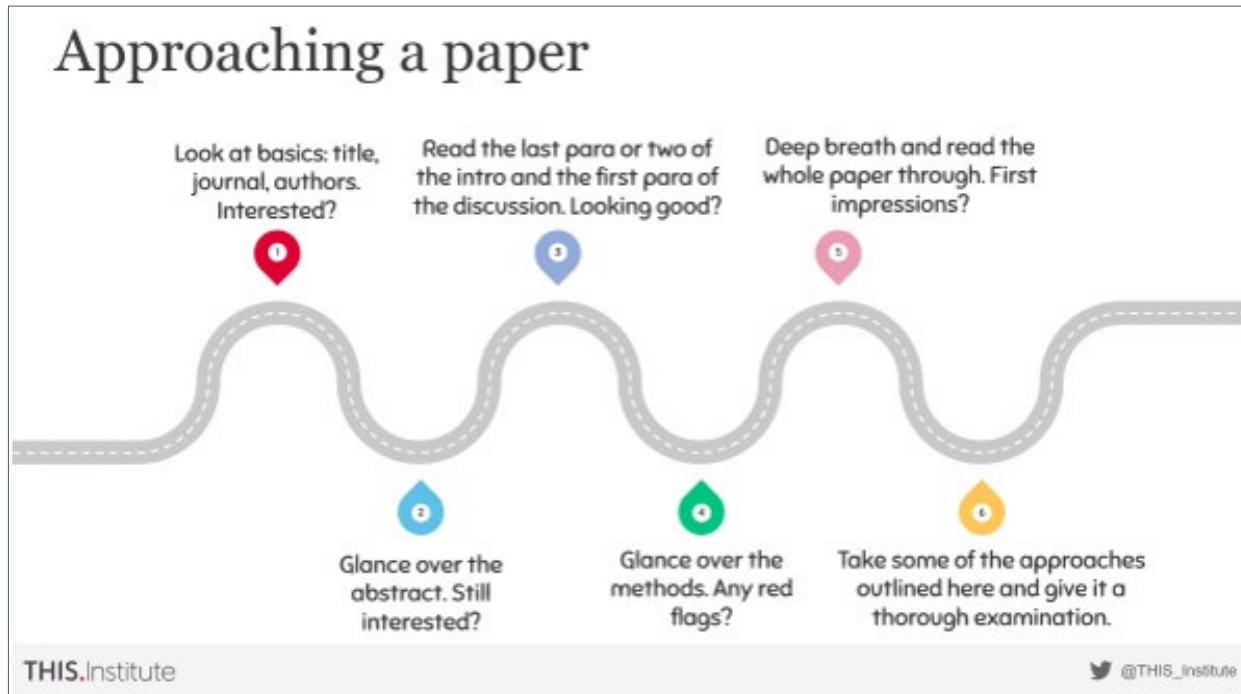
Author _____ Year _____ Record Number _____

	Yes	No	Unclear	Not applicable
1. Is there congruity between the stated philosophical perspective and the research methodology?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the research question or objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the methods used to collect data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is there congruity between the research methodology and the representation and analysis of data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Lots of different ways to take on formal critical appraisal and the one you choose to use depends on paper you have in front of you. And whether you're looking across lots of different types of research.
- The other formal approach is what you do if you submit a research paper.

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- Quite a useful reminder is that even though there are terribly formal ways, it won't necessarily tell you if the paper is any good.
- All you need to ask yourself is: 'Is it good?' And, 'Is it useful?'
- There's a journey you go through when you come across a paper that looks interesting: the first thing to look at is the basics: the author, the title, the journal.



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- If I'm still interested, I tend to read the last two paragraphs of the introduction. I might then look at the first paragraph of the discussion, which should provide an overview. If that's looking good, I will go back to the methodology.
- Think about first impressions, then use some of the approaches. Is it a good question: you are the detective here. Everyone will have a different understanding of what is good.
- **Look around the paper**, ask yourself:
- What journal is it published in? How established is it? How well regarded? Who is the author? Who is the publisher? How many citations? Who has cited it? Has it appeared in policy or guidelines?
- Beware predatory journals: these are there to make money, they're not reviewing research, they are to be avoided. Ask yourself if this is a journal you feel comfortable with and have a good impression of.
- Looking at the authors: do you know them? Where are they based? What are their backgrounds? Is the team sufficiently experienced? Are they well known in this field?



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- These are the questions we look at:



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- **Look in the paper, ask yourself:**

- Are the research questions clear? Are the questions suited to qualitative inquiry? Are the claims made supported by sufficient evidence? Is the data, interpretations, and conclusions clearly integrated?
- Are the findings transferable to your setting, population, question? In what way?
- What does the paper tell us beyond a description of one issue for one set of people in one setting?
- You can always pick holes, but does it seem reasonable?

- There are basic questions here that are very important. There are some general principles. Have they spoken to enough people if it's for this study, have they spoken to the right people? Qualitative research isn't a trial-based approach you need to be course-correcting all the time to respond to the data that's coming towards you.



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- Always check the bibliography if you can.
- Remember: there's looking around and there's looking 'in'.
- Remember to ask yourself, what is the relevance for your work? Always remember that researchers are human, they make mistakes and they have limitations. It's impossible to do a perfect qualitative research paper.
- **Usefulness:**

Usefulness – focus on methods and findings



Sometimes papers are useful for their *methods* – you want to do something similar, and you can see what was done previously



Sometimes papers are useful for their *findings* – you want to know more about that topic, and they can tell you something helpful

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- Qualitative research is a big wide world with multiple approaches.
- Peer-review does not always help you. Just because something is published does not always mean it's great. Ask yourself, is it good? What are the clues the paper is giving me?
- I really like an appraisal system called MMAT (Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool): http://mixedmethodsappraisaltoolpublic.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/127916259/MMAT_2018_criteria-manual_2018-08-01_ENG.pdf
- Answering a question on survey size in qualitative interview studies: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26613970/>
- Sample size is a much debated topic. The challenge about sample size is what is needed for your research question, that's the variable. It's really dependent on what is your aim and the quality of the dialogue. It is variable and you need to have the confidence to justify why what you've done is appropriate. People underestimate what is needed in systematic reviews, if you're going to do it properly you're talking about double screening, it takes hours and hours to do properly. But also systematic review juggernaut has gone a bit too far too.
- I would encourage students to take elements of systematic reviews but there needs to be an authorial voice too.

Thank you to all 144 delegates who attended today's Masterclass.

Next masterclasses in the series:

1. Writing for publication: tips from an editor with Professor Catherine Walsh

28 February 2023 1-2pm

Book here:

<https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/community-nursing-bitesize-research-masterclass-28-02-23/>

2. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

16 March 2023, 1-2pm

Book here:

<https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/community-nursing-bitesize-research-masterclass-16-03-23/>

3. Planning and navigating research ethical approvals

20 April 2023, 1-2pm

Book here:

<https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/community-nursing-bitesize-research-masterclass-20-04-23/>

COMMENTS

A selection from delegates:

Excellent presentation Jenni thank you. I wish you had led the qualitative module when I completed my MSc :)

Excellent session - thank you Jenni Thank you Ben

Great session, I found this really informative

Excellent clear and very enjoyable presentation, thank you Jenni.

Thank you, a really helpful session.

Thank you very much for the presentation which I found to be very useful and supportive.

Thank you this is super helpful and very timely for my PhD work :)

That was great. very helpful. Thank you.

Thank you so much this has been very informative

