

**Opportunities, Challenges, and Tensions: Open Science through a lens of Qualitative
Social Psychology**

Madeleine Pownall¹, Catherine V. Talbot², Laura Kilby³, and Peter Branney⁴

1. School of Psychology, University of Leeds; 0000-0002-3734-8006
2. School of Psychology, Bournemouth University; 0000-0001-9353-8990
3. Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics, Sheffield Hallam University;
0000-0002-9766-1985
4. Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Management, Law
& Social Sciences, University of Bradford; 0000-0002-2084-461X

Author Note.

All authors contributed equally to the development, management, editing, and writing of this Special Section. However, we are conscious of the unique challenges that early-career researchers face in this space (e.g., Pownall et al., 2021), therefore, we have ordered our authorship here by years post-PhD, with the most recent career colleague first.

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Correspondence

Correspondence should be addressed to Madeleine Pownall (M.V.Pownall@leeds.ac.uk), Catherine Talbot (Ctalbot@bournemouth.ac.uk), Laura Kilby (l.kilby@shu.ac.uk) and Peter Branney (p.branney@bradford.ac.uk).

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a focus in social psychology on efforts to improve the robustness, rigour, transparency, and openness of psychological research. This has led to a plethora of new tools, practices, and initiatives that each aim to combat questionable research practices and improve the credibility of social psychological scholarship. However, the majority of these efforts derive from quantitative, deductive, hypothesis-testing methodologies, and there has been a notable lack of in-depth exploration about what the tools, practices, and values may mean for research which uses *qualitative* methodologies. Here, we introduce a Special Section of BJSP: *Open Science, Qualitative Methods and Social Psychology: Possibilities and Tensions*. Authors critically discuss a range of issues, including authorship, data sharing, and broader research practices. Taken together, these papers urge the discipline to carefully consider the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of efforts to improve psychological science, and advocate for a critical appreciation of how mainstream open science discourse may (or may not) be compatible with the goals of qualitative research.

Keywords: Open Science; Qualitative methods, Qualitative social psychology, open data, pre-registration, metascience, reproducibility, Interaction Analysis, authorship, contributorship

Opportunities, Challenges, and Tensions: Open Science through a lens of Qualitative Social Psychology

In recent years, there has been a focus on improving the transparency and robustness of psychological science, which has been dubbed the ‘open science’ movement, conversation, or reform. The open science (henceforth OS) movement is developing at pace within psychology (see, McIntosh & Chambers, 2020), pursuing a broad ambition to better the quality of scientific research through activities including study pre-registration and open sharing of data. Such activities are designed to minimise bias and improve the reproducibility or robustness of research findings. So far, the movement has responded enthusiastically to concerns over researcher bias and questionable research practices, attending primarily to quantitative methodologies. However, whilst such activities may be aligned with quantitative, deductive, hypothesis-testing methodologies, the potential application of OS practices to qualitative methodologies is at best, complex, and at worst a threat to the future of established qualitative social psychology (henceforth QSP) practices. While the emergence of OS in social psychology might be viewed – in part – as a self-reflexive discipline adapting to the increasing recognition of widespread questionable research practices, we might also caution that in the rush to improve our discipline, it is helpful to also pay heed to our history. It is vital, therefore, that qualitative researchers explore how OS practices and qualitative methods may inform or contradict each other.

Despite some notable exceptions (Branney et al., 2019; Chauvette et al., 2019; Haven et al., 2020), the applicability of OS to qualitative methodologies in social psychology remains in its infancy, and yet systemic changes – pre-registration and data sharing, for example – are increasingly likely to influence all researchers (Riley et al., 2019). Moreover, these changes appear to disregard long-standing concerns about the inappropriate use of positivist criteria to judge qualitative research (Smith & McGannon, 2018) and potentially undermine recent progress, including that reflected by the American Psychological Association support for journal article reporting standards (JARS) for qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2018). Indeed, the British Journal of Health Psychology recognised that these JARS ‘levelled the playing field’ in helping to enhance the quality and transparency of qualitative methods in psychology (Shaw et al., 2019). Further, QSP research regularly confronts legitimate sensitivities around the ethical management of personal data, leading qualitative researchers to arrive at carefully tailored procedures for securely managing raw data (e.g. audio/ visual recordings of participant interviews, focus groups or observational studies; photographs taken in photo-elicitation/photovoice research) and processes for protecting participant anonymity (i.e. the use of pseudonyms in published research). Such issues present obvious questions related to possibilities for data sharing (Branney et al., 2017, 2019). Moreover, sharing data for re-analysis raises far reaching ethical questions associated with the reappraisal of qualitative data outside of the contextual and temporal conditions in which it was gathered. An additional array of concerns relate to the empiricist-driven OS assumptions which presume that bias, subjectivity or positionality are inherently flawed features of robust research, highlighting that efforts to improve ‘reproducibility’, do not align with the co-constructed, subjective approach of much qualitative social psychology research.

The two key principles in the British Psychological Society position statement on open data (2020) highlight some of the possibilities and tensions of OS for qualitative

methods in social psychology; data should be ‘as open as possible; as closed as necessary’ while decisions should be ‘justified and justifiable’. It is crucial therefore, that OS is not only suitable for hypothesis-testing but for the diverse epistemological, theoretical and methodological approaches employed in social psychology broadly (Gibson & Smith, 2020).

The development of systematic changes brought about by the OS movement mean that qualitative social psychologists are increasingly facing new requirements which present significant implications for their research practices. As a result, there is a growing interest, and perhaps also a growing anxiety amongst qualitative researchers about what OS might mean for the future of social psychology. It is increasingly the case that researchers are asked to share their data when submitting a paper for publication, something which is a particularly acute issue for qualitative researchers (Branney et al., 2017). Furthermore, the OS Framework have released a template for qualitative research (Hartman et al., 2018) and the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN) has over 50 member network universities in the UK, promoting OS across all disciplines and methodologies. Therefore, this special section is timely considering these far-reaching and fast-paced developments in OS.

A consideration of qualitative methods and OS is important for the progression of OS and social psychology broadly because contemporary social psychology encompasses both quantitative and qualitative methods that variously draw upon a range of epistemological underpinnings and methodological approaches. The re-emergence of qualitative methods in the 1980’s associated with the ‘crisis’ in social Psychology (Hepburn, 2003) brought with it an increased appreciation of methods which emphasise subjectivity, reflexivity, researcher positionality and bias. Such concerns provide a vital counterbalance to the primacy of methods founded in claims to objectivity as is often the case in the hypothetico-deductive method. Proponents of QSP have given significant attention to ontological, epistemological

and methodological argument, in part to secure a seat at the table of accepted social psychological enquiry. Whilst differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches, arguably, still reflect a divide in social psychology, qualitative research has become a firmly established canon of knowledge, providing findings that sit alongside quantitative research in a range of social psychology journals. In order to maintain this hard-won position, it is essential that QSP now focuses its attention to the OS debates (Chambers, 2019; Ritchie, 2020), the outcomes of which are already shaping core research processes and funding landscapes (see e.g., Button et al., 2020; Chambers, 2020; Munafò et al., 2017).

The Special Section

This special section of *British Journal of Social Psychology* aims to highlight the insights that qualitative methods might contribute to OS in social psychology, and vice versa. We invited a critical examination of the opportunities and/or barriers for qualitative methods to participate in OS practices in opening up the processes of design, data collection and analysis in social psychology research. Overall, this aimed to radically reimagine a more ‘open’ and inclusive OS that is attentive to the wide range of methodologies employed in social psychology. In this special section, authors collectively grappled with the relevance of OS for qualitative social psychology, the opportunity for mutual learning between the two conversations, as well as practical recommendations for improving robustness of qualitative research in a way that is epistemologically appropriate. This special section encompasses four papers, with broad foci, including authorship, interaction analysis, open data sharing, and broader considerations of epistemological and ontological tensions with qualitative social psychology and OS.

Myriam Baum, Moritz Braun, Alexander Hart, Véronique Huffer, Julia Meßmer, Michael Weigl and Lasse Wennerhold (2023) focus on authorship order from a social

psychological perspective. They highlight how psychology's focus on the 'first author takes it all' leads to a devaluation of middle authors and explore the challenges associated with ensuring appropriate credit for all contributors. In their paper, the authors problematise the existing traditions of communicating authorship in published research, where author order stands as a proxy by which levels of individual researcher contribution are routinely surmised. For Baum et al, (2023) - and we note the irony of shortening the seven authors' names to 'Baum et al.' - the OS ambitions for increased transparency, accountability and equality necessitate a wholesale shift away from the routines of authorship which, they argue, run counter to OS aims. The authors suggest that enhanced transparency and accountability regarding author contribution is an especially live concern for those qualitative social psychological research methods where individual researcher subjectivity is interwoven with research findings. In such cases, Baum et al (2023) contend that the traditional emphasis on first author, or indeed last author, obscures other author subjectivities in relation to published findings. Having outlined their case for change (see also, Branney et al., 2022) in proposing a shift to using a contribution system (i.e., CRediT; see, Allen et al., 2014), which enables the contribution of each researcher to be recognised. They then develop a series of recommendations for changing practices in relation to title page presentation, in-text citations, and bibliographies. Pre-empting the challenges that their proposals might face, Baum et al., (2023) offer responses before outlining the benefits that such a change might offer for researchers, publishers, and funders.

The question of authorship is live in this special section; the British Journal of Social Psychology guidance-for-authors explains that the manuscript submission system will require the person submitting a paper to provide author contributions according to the CRediT taxonomy. You will see that three papers (Baum et al., 2023; Huma & Joyce, 2023; Prosser et al., 2023), and this editorial, provide a CRediT contributorship statement in what the journal

presents as the ‘author contributions’ section. Perhaps the reason one paper (Karhulahti, 2023) is lacking such a statement is because it is a sole authored paper, and the journal style did not require it. Two papers acknowledge feedback from others on drafts, raising a question as to whether the, often common, practice of having colleagues feedback on drafts should be included in the CRediT statement (and therefore as an author) for ‘writing - review and editing’, specifically ‘critical review, commentary’ (Allen et al., 2014). Two of the papers (Karhulahti, 2023; Prosser et al., 2023) also acknowledge anonymous peer reviewers, whose contribution is currently obscured (although some publishers do show reviewer contributions, such as Wellcome Open Research; see e.g., Harvey et al., 2020). Additionally, these same authors have shared multiple versions - 3 and 7 versions, respectively (Karhulahti, 2021; Prosser et al., 2021) - on preprint servers, showing how the papers have changed following revision. We are mindful that despite Baum et al.’s recommendations, we are following the journal guidance-for-authors in mostly referring to authors using their surname and shortening multiple authors to ‘et al.’. Nevertheless, *BJSP* makes no obvious stipulations about authorship order and we, in this editorial, have chosen to acknowledge the challenges faced by early career researchers (e.g., Pownall et al., 2021) by ordering authors by year of PhD completion, with the most recent first.

The next three papers can be understood as variously considering the practice of sharing data (although they are not exclusively about data sharing), so that data might be ‘accessed and used by others’ (FORRT, 2021; for an introduction to open data for qualitative methods, see Branney et al., 2022). First, Annayah Prosser and colleagues (2023) explore the role of journals and academic publishers in sharing research data. Against the backdrop of the OS movement as largely shaped by quantitative research drivers, and emphasising the ontological, epistemological and methodological variation in qualitative psychology, these authors contend that the momentum for sharing data in the social sciences puts qualitative

research at a distinct disadvantage and raises particular challenges which are not necessarily well recognised. In unpacking these issues, the authors focus on the shifting OS expectations and related metrics of publishers, designed to encourage, promote and reward researchers who engage with data sharing practices. Prosser et al., (2023) consider how (and if) these changing expectations support or hinder qualitative social psychology research via a content analysis of open data policies and guidelines published by social psychology journals. Their review of the open data guidance of 261 English-language social psychology journals reveals that the guidance is poorly articulated for much qualitative data. In keeping with points made by all authors in the special section, Prosser et al., (2023) view the OS ambitions of transparency and integrity as laudable and well aligned with the values of QSP broadly. However, they also point to complexities around increasing the accessibility of knowledge for qualitative research and emphasise the need for the careful and thoughtful development of data sharing practices as they relate to QSP. The authors finish by offering a series of recommendations that might support the co-production of appropriate journal guidelines for sharing (or not) qualitative data and they look to the *BJSP* as possible leaders in this work.

In contrast, Bogdana Huma and Jack Joyce (2023) ask what we can learn from the contemporary history of Interaction Analysis in tailoring OS practices, particularly replication and data sharing, for social psychology. In describing Interaction Analysis and its contemporary history, they illustrate that a simulacrum of replication is “baked into” (p. 11) its practice. Specifically, Huma and Joyce describe an ethos of validating results in new datasets (integrative replication; see also, Freese & Peterson, 2017) and jointly sharing and interrogating data in data analysis sessions (described in Haven et al., 2020). In addition, Huma and Joyce describe the practice of, albeit limited, sharing the ‘classic corpus’ of IA interactions collected in a middle class area of the United States of America in the 1960s and 1970s. This ‘classic corpus’ reminds us of reinterpretations of Milgram’s experiments

through access to the audio recordings, although these have arguably allowed new interpretations rather than validation (for more details, see Gibson, 2015). Huma and Joyce give the ‘One in a Million’ database of primary care consultations in the UK (Jepson et al., 2017) as a more recent example of data sharing of - sensitive - interactions as well as using, and linking to, data in the public domain, such as YouTube (Joyce et al., 2021). Thus, they point out that, whilst the drivers of OS, namely transparency and accountability, might equally well align with the ethical, moral aims of qualitative social psychology, the practical solutions as developed in accordance with quantitative psychology traditions may not. Further, these authors point to the heterogeneity of qualitative research methods and the range of ontologies and epistemologies that qualitative research draws upon, arguing that what might stand as welcome OS developments for some researchers working in some qualitative traditions, might serve as retrograde steps for others. Huma and Joyce (2023) conclude by inviting QSP to ‘look inward’, ‘look outward’ and ‘look ahead’ in developing a tailored, method-first approach to navigating OS and qualitative methods in social psychology.

Last, Veli-Matti Karhulahti (2023) focuses on co-produced qualitative data - particularly but not exclusively interviews and focus groups - to explore the advantages of sharing qualitative data. After highlighting 1) that anonymising co-produced qualitative data is complex and resource intensive (Branney et al., 2019; Neale & Bishop, 2011; Roller & Lavrakas, 2018), 2) participants may still be identifiable through what is termed the ‘innocent collection of details’ (Branney et al., 2017; see also, Broom et al., 2009; McCurdy & Ross, 2018; Parry & Mauthner, 2004), and 3) qualitative data is rarely shared; Karhulahti notes changes that mean archiving may now be easier and is becoming an expectation, if not a requirement. DuBois et al. (DuBois, Strait, et al., 2018; DuBois, Walsh, et al., 2018) for example, argue that sharing qualitative data should become the default assumption ‘unless concerns exist that cannot be overcome’, which is similar to the British Psychological

Society's principle of 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary (2020; see also, DuBois, Walsh, et al., 2018). Karhulahti boldly challenges readers to consider the sharing of co-produced qualitative data as more ethical, less risky and easier than sharing of quantitative data where researchers ostensibly maintain a distance from their participants. Karhulahti's (2022) advocacy for qualitative data sharing presents a measured optimism whilst also highlighting the significant additional labour involved for researchers and remaining mindful of the diversity of qualitative methods, acknowledging that differing methods and areas of qualitative psychology might be more or less amenable to data sharing.

As with authorship, open data is live in this special section. All papers have a 'Data Availability Statement' which is now standard for this journal and is requested during manuscript submission. Prosser et al., (2023) have badges for open data and open materials and have shared the coded data and researchers' reflections. Nevertheless, Prosser et al., (2023) note that the underlying data in their study - the journal guidelines - is under third-party copyright, thereby preventing them from creating an archive. This highlights at least two issues about sharing qualitative data. First, even data in the public domain might require the development of intermediary 'data' suitable for analysis and/or sharing. Second, intellectual property rights may limit sharing, redistribution or even stable links. It is useful to be aware of this when considering Huma and Joyce's (2023) point about linking to data in the public domain, such as from YouTube (Joyce et al., 2021). Indeed, Granger et al., (2021) highlight that Twitter's privacy policy stipulates that it will reflect updates, such as deleting a post or deactivating an account, and therefore researchers may want to consider if they need to do the same. In addition, Prosser et al., (2023) have shared their materials and data using a view-only link, which means access is only via the paper (although the link could be shared without the paper) and is, as far as we understand, unlikely to be found through Internet or library database search.

A Look to the Future: Lingerin g Questions and Call to Action

The papers within this special section collectively voice some of the most current thinking about the OS movement and its relationship with qualitative social psychology. Taken together, across four papers, this Special Section has considered open science through a lens of qualitative social psychology. Importantly, each paper provides practical recommendations for the appropriate integration of open science practices into qualitative research (summarised in Table 1). These include recommendations for individual researchers (e.g., related to methodological framing and ways of determining contributorship) as well as more wider calls for top-down support for qualitative researchers (e.g., a need for OS to recognise the diversity of qualitative approaches). Looking across the papers, we have noted some overarching and inter-related themes which we see as reflective of the current status of the relationship between OS and QSP, and indicative of future challenges. We detail such overarching themes now.

Table 1. Summary of recommendations from each contribution to this Special Issue

Paper	Summary of Recommendations
Baum et al., (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alphabetical ordering in byline to prevent author order bias (though does introduce alphabetical order bias found in economics (Einav & Yariv, 2006)) ● Use CRediT taxonomy to identify contribution of each author ● Numerical system for in-text citations (e.g., Vancouver) ● Correspondence information for all authors - i.e. ORCID id, which can be updated
Huma and Joyce (2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Look ‘inward’ to the practices of qualitative methods, particularly Interaction Analysis, to see if open science practices, or similar, already occur ● Look ‘outward’ of a methodological

	<p>frame of reference to see what practices can be adopted to enhance its transparency and trustworthiness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Third, look ‘ahead’ at how to overcome the challenges of researchers adopting and/or learning new practices.
<p>Prosser et al. (2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize the breadth and complexity in qualitative approaches ● Reviewers and editors should assess articles on the clarity and quality of their particular argument for <i>or</i> against opening data, rather than solely on whether the data has been made openly available ● Rethink word limits for journals to accommodate qualitative approaches ● Provide further accessible training and resources around transparent research practices that include the complexities of issues surrounding open data
<p>Veli-Matti Karhulahti (2022)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss, negotiate and validate informed consent for open data sharing with qualitative methods ● Critically consider when data sharing is epistemologically, ethically and pragmatically possible.

Firstly, all four papers demonstrate support for the underlying principles of OS. This is unsurprising, and a reflection of the underpinning ethical drivers beneath the broader turn to qualitative methods in social psychology which pre-date the replication crisis and the contemporary drivers of OS (see e.g., Hepburn, 2003). Whilst unsurprising, explicitly recognising these shared foundations is important, particularly because tensions between QSP and the implementation of some OS practices (e.g. data sharing), are often related to practical ethical concerns. If our collective journey as social psychologists is one that is fundamentally chartered by respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (British Psychological Society, 2018), then we have solid foundations which can motivate both qualitative and quantitative researchers to develop appropriate OS practices in the pursuit of *ethical* science.

Secondly, all four papers are at pains to emphasise the heterogeneity of QSP methods. Whilst recognising there are also diverse quantitative methods, as these four papers highlight, for QSP the methodological differences are also reflective of differing ontologies and epistemologies. This has far-reaching implications for how OS practices might develop within the field of QSP and cautions against the pursuit of rigid OS practices for QSP. Instead, just as the papers in this special section demonstrate, QSP methods require appropriate latitude to explore how they can foster meaningful OS practices that mutually reinforce their commitment to ethical science. The nature of such work suggests it cannot be a ‘bolt on’ or a kind of remedial fix to existing methods. Rather, it speaks to a methodological and cultural evolution of the QSP community, and indeed, the wider scientific community. Such evolution needs time, but also shared vision. As the OS movement continues to grow, it is vital that QSP develops a strong vision for its own engagement with OS which values and accommodates the breadth of QSP approaches. We qualitative researchers in social psychology must also cultivate a unified voice that can champion the need for flexibility in wider OS debates.

Lastly, our four papers collectively point to the additional labour inherent in the pursuit of OS. Increased workload is not insignificant, and it can extend the time needed for every stage of a research project (e.g. preparing a data management plan; developing ethics; interactions and collaborations with participants; data management, storage and retrieval; researcher upskilling to utilise new technologies). Moreover, engagement with OS also requires increased conceptual and planning stages. Recognising and responding to these extra demands is essential if OS is to evolve in the way described above and meet its ambitions. In our view, the route forward lies in making a dual commitment to OS and Slow Science (Berg & Seeber, 2016) as mutually constitutive philosophies. We are not the first to draw such connections, or point to ‘fast science’ as running counter to OS. Indeed the culture of ‘fast

science' has been linked with the replication crisis in Psychology (Frith, 2020). Whilst we do not have scope to unpack this debate further here, we encourage the QSP community to resist haste when it comes to the development of OS, and instead commit to and champion OS as the enactment of slow science.

The *BJSP* has a long history of valuing and promoting the diverse theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions of qualitative social psychology alongside the contributions of quantitative research. This special section reflects a continuation of that tradition which we hope will help to draw attention to the current status of OS and QSP, and to stimulate further developments. If the OS movement is going to deliver against its overall objectives to improve the quality and accountability of scientific research for the public good, then, within the field of Social Psychology, it is vital that OS practices evolve in a manner that embraces both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. To this end, we invite readers from qualitative *and* quantitative backgrounds to engage with this special section, and let these papers stimulate thoughtful, innovative and synergistic streams of collaborative discussion and activity for the betterment of *all* science.

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