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JARS as a Teaching Tool: Helping Students Think and Write Like Scholars

LoriAnn Stretch, PhD, Professor, University of the Cumberland

Jayna Bonfini, PhD, Associate Professor, University of the Cumberland

David Kofalt, APA Product Analyst, Moderator

Webinar Goals & Agenda

Goals: Share practical insights on how to use APA Style JARS as an instructor.

Agenda:

- Introduction to JARS for instructors
- Panelist presentation and discussion
- Q&A

Housekeeping

- This webinar is being recorded and will be made available on demand
- The slides and additional resources will be shared with webinar attendees
- You are welcome to ask questions throughout the webinar using chat. You will be able to add questions for up to 3 days after this event.

APA Style JARS

APA Style Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) offer guidance on what information should be included in all manuscript sections for quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research and include how to best discuss race, ethnicity, and culture.

The standards are useful not only to researchers, but also instructors and students. Below is recent feedback on the usefulness of JARS in the classroom:

- JARS provides structure for reporting and writing
- JARS help students understand the role of peer reviewers
- The standards help strengthen manuscripts and critiques of methods
- It works like a checklist for students, which helps them understand the information that is necessary to cover in a paper

In our 2025 survey measuring the usefulness of JARS across various professions, nearly 50% of instructors noted being ***extremely likely*** to recommend the standards to a colleague.

Our presenters

Dr. LoriAnn Stretch is Professor and Past Director of Scholarly Engagement at the University of the Cumberlands. Dr. Stretch is an advocate of APA Style JARS, incorporating it into classroom activities for graduate and doctoral students and using it to mentor junior faculty. In addition to her work in academia, Dr. Stretch has served as a clinical director of a multidisciplinary mental health agency and practiced counseling for over 25 years.

Dr. Jayna Bonfini is Associate Professor and Past Director of the PhD Program at the University of the Cumberlands. Dr. Bonfini uses JARS not only to teach students but also as a faculty member and dissertation chair to identify relevant information and assess a study. Dr. Bonfini has significant research and clinical experience and has worked in a variety of settings, including a college counseling center, psychiatric hospital, and justice-involved organizations.

Presentation

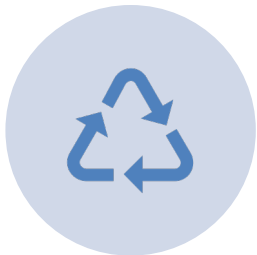
Learning Objectives



Describe the purpose and value of APA's Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) in promoting transparent and rigorous research reporting.



Differentiate how JARS can be used developmentally at the master's and doctoral levels in counselor education.



Apply JARS-informed strategies to support research critique, instruction, and feedback.



Identify practical ways to use JARS in teaching and mentoring students.

Why JARS Matters Across Training Levels



JARS helps make research reporting more organized and evaluable



Students often struggle to know what to look for when reading research



JARS gives faculty and students a shared language for discussing quality



JARS can support both research production and research consumption

Developmental Use of JARS

Masters Level

- Evaluating published studies in a structured, guided way
- Consumer of research

Doctoral Level

- Reporting one's own study with rigor and transparency
- Producer of research
- Peer reviewer

Shared Goal: Building research literacy & methodological reasoning



JARS-QUAL in the Master's Research Methods Classroom

- Using JARS-QUAL as a scaffold for article critique
- Helping students move beyond “I liked/didn’t like this article”
- Teaching students how to identify what is present, missing, unclear, or misaligned
- Using JARS for instruction, assignment design, and formative feedback



Why Use JARS-QUAL With Master's Students?

Many students find qualitative articles difficult to decode

They may not know what counts as a strong methods section

They often confuse interesting findings with rigorous research

JARS-QUAL gives them a concrete review framework

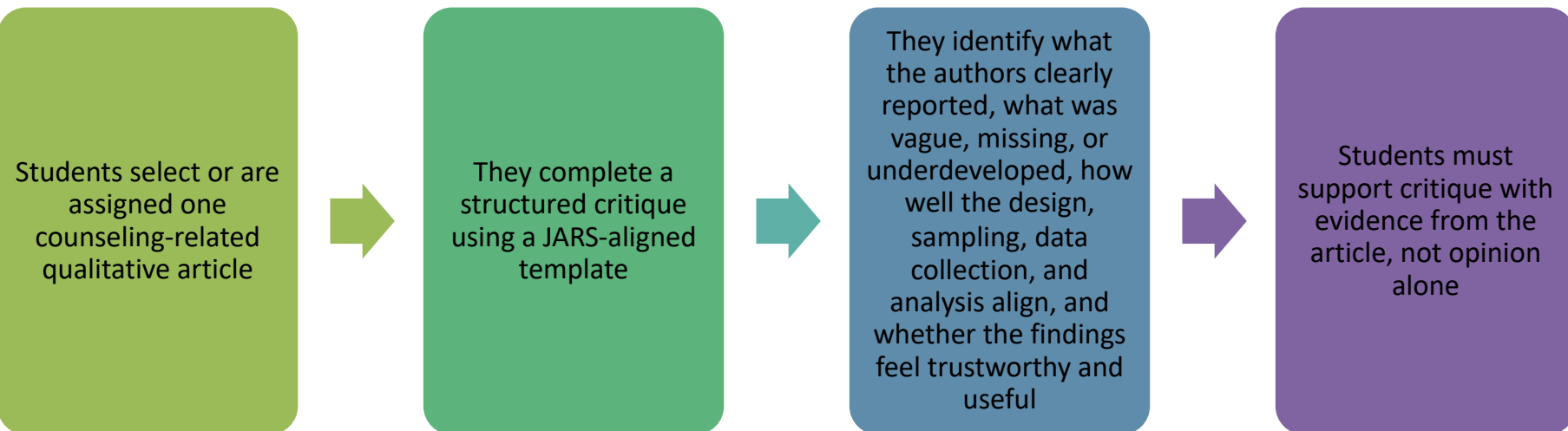
It supports critical thinking without requiring the to be advanced qualitative researchers

Instructional Approach

- Introduce JARS-QUAL after students learn basic qualitative traditions
- Present JARS as a reader's tool, not just an author's checklist
- Model how to “read with the standards in mind”
- Focus on major categories (e.g., problem, purpose, qualitative approach, participant recruitment/selection, data collection, data analysis, methodological integrity/trustworthiness, findings, implications)



Sample Assignment: JARS-QUAL Article Critique



Turning Standards Into Usable Prompts

Criterion	Guiding Question
Purpose	Is the purpose of the study clear and well justified?
Approach	Do the authors identify the qualitative approach and explain why it fits?
Participants	Who participated, how were they selected, and is that process clear?
Data collection	What data were collected, how, where, and for how long?
Data analysis	How did the researchers move from raw data to findings?
Researcher stance / reflexivity	Do the authors explain their role and possible influence?
Methodological integrity	What did they do to strengthen the credibility of findings?
Results	Are themes/findings clearly supported with quotes or examples?
Discussion	Do the implications match the findings without overclaiming?

Sample Article Critique Prompt

Prompt Excerpt: Using the JARS-QUAL framework, evaluate how clearly and rigorously the authors reported the qualitative study. Address the study's purpose, qualitative approach, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, methodological integrity, results, and implications. Support your critique with specific examples from the article.

Why this helps:

- makes expectations explicit
- reduces student ambiguity
- aligns rubric and feedback with instruction

JARS-QUAL as a Feedback Tool

- Feedback tied to specific reporting elements rather than vague impressions
- Feedback can address:
 - missing methodological detail
 - weak attention to alignment
 - overreliance on summary instead of evaluation
 - unsupported judgments
 - failure to discuss trustworthiness and methodological integrity

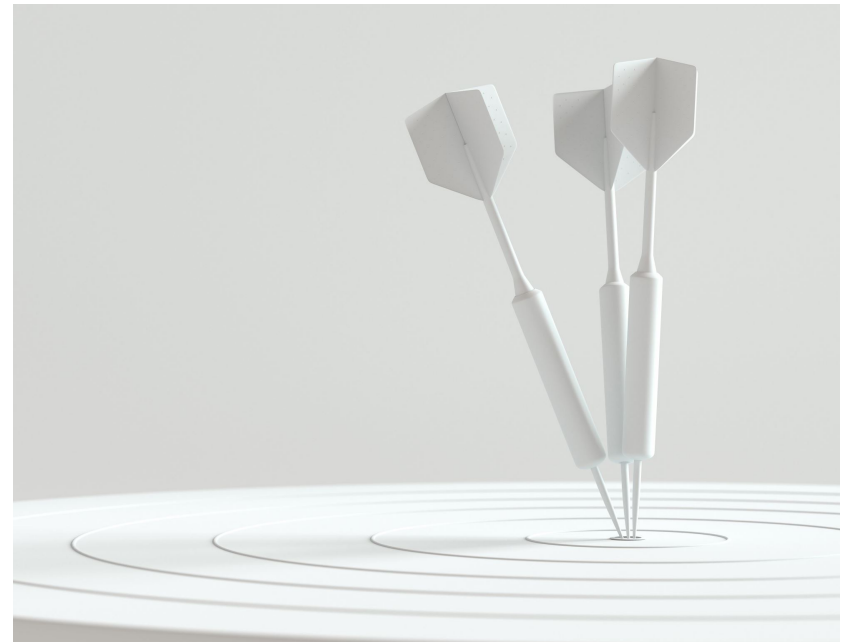
Sample feedback phrases:

- You identified the findings, but you did not evaluate how the authors arrived at them.
- Your critique would be stronger if you addressed participant selection and recruitment.
- You note that the study seems credible, but what evidence in the article supports that judgment?
- Consider whether the qualitative approach was named and justified clearly.

Learning Outcomes at the Master's Level

Students become better able to:

- read qualitative research with less intimidation
- identify the key parts of a qualitative study
- distinguish description from critique
- recognize strengths and limitations in reporting
- make more informed judgments about rigor, transparency, and applicability
- carry these habits into evidence-based practice



JARS as a Developmental Teaching Tool



At the master's level, JARS works well as a scaffold for article critique



It gives students structure, vocabulary, and confidence

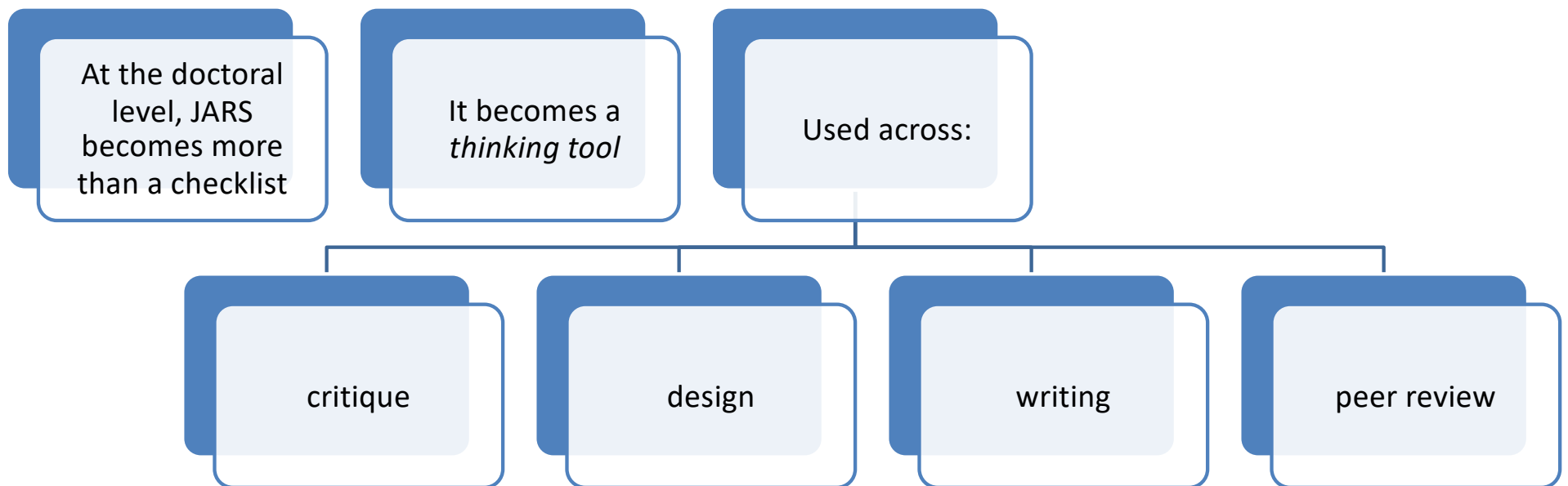


It improves instruction, assignment clarity, and feedback quality



It lays the groundwork for more advanced research engagement later

Moving from Learning Research to Thinking Like Scholars



JARS-QUANT at the Doctoral Level

Research Methods Courses

- Early stage → critique and comprehension
- Mid-stage → design and evaluation
- Advanced stage → manuscript development and pre-review

CES 734: Learning to Read Like a Researcher



Identify 2 strengths and 2 limitations using JARS–Quant



Analyze one descriptive statistic (with numeric interpretation)



Address ethical and competency considerations



Provide APA citation

Focus is on *how the study was conducted*, not just what was studied

CES 734 Sample (Student Thinking)

- “The abstract provides the research problem and rationale but lacks a clearly stated hypothesis and design... Participant demographics are incomplete, and statistical procedures are not specified.”
- “A limitation is the absence of participant flow data... group sizes across stages are unclear.”
- “A strength is the structured literature review that narrows from general ED research to therapeutic alliance...”

Why This Matters

Move from summary → **methodological critique**

Learn to

- identify missing reporting elements
- interpret statistical choices
- connect ethics to design

Begin thinking like

- reviewers
- researchers
- future authors

Professional Standards

- Evaluate quantitative research designs
- Identify appropriate design for research questions
- Analyze sampling strategies
- Interpret and critique statistical use
- Apply ethical and culturally responsive research practices
- Strengthen scholarly writing and peer review skills

CES 738: Evaluating Research Like a Scholar

Critically evaluate article using

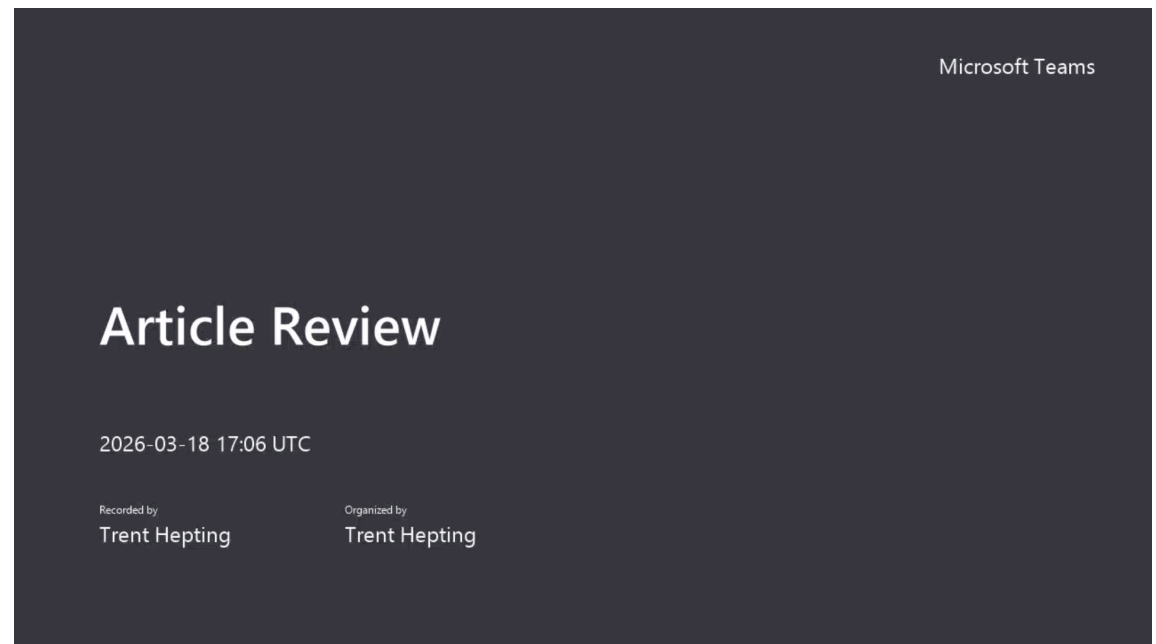
- JARS–Quant
- One additional JARS tool (e.g., JARS–REC)

Focus on

- Methodology alignment
- Statistical appropriateness
- Ethical and cultural considerations

Deliver

- 12–20-minute presentation
- Structured handout
- Peer Q&A



The Shift We See

Students begin to

- Ask better research questions
- Justify design decisions
- Identify bias and limitations
- Write with clarity and precision
- Anticipate reviewer expectations



Using JARS as a Pre-Reviewer

Alignment: RQs $\leftrightarrow$ variables $\leftrightarrow$ analysis

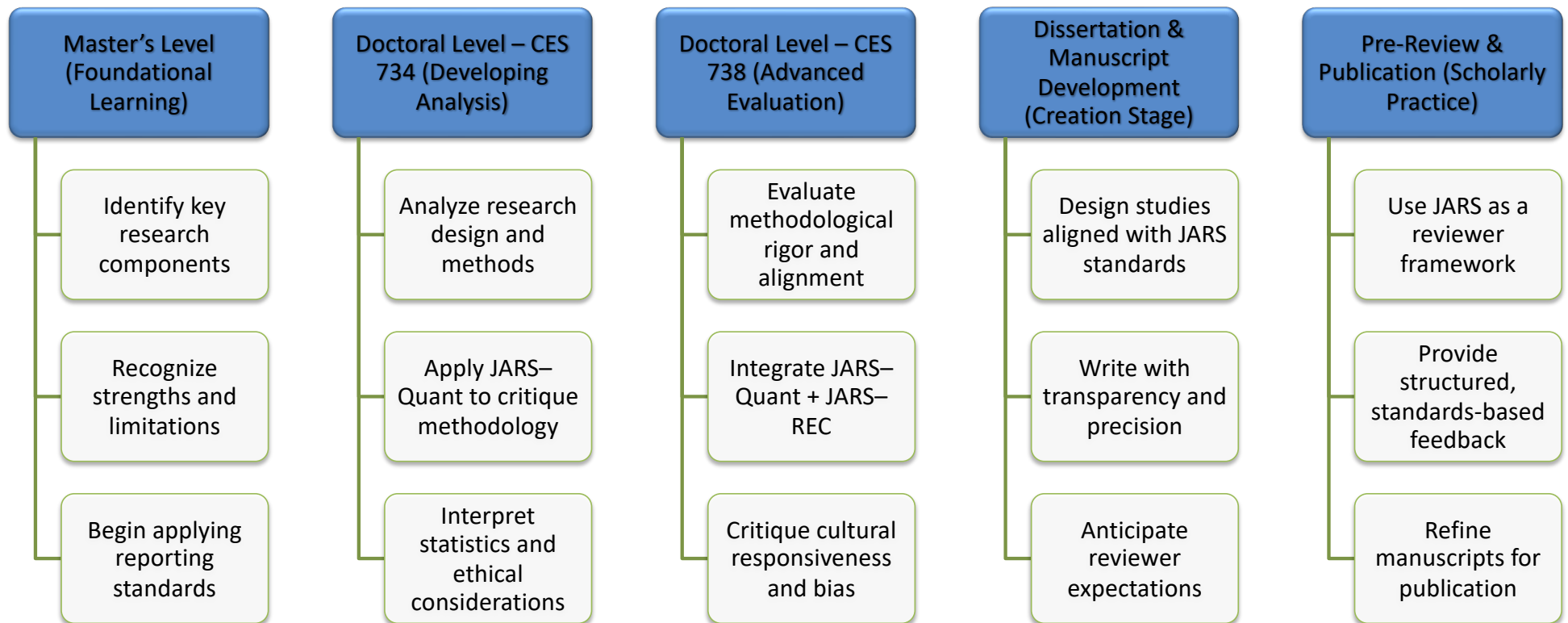
Transparency of procedures and decisions

Completeness reporting standards

Ethical clarity of participant protections

Cultural responsiveness

JARS as a Scaffold



Example: JARS-Guided Feedback

The study identifies predictors but does not clearly specify whether the design is predictive correlational

Variables are introduced but not operationally defined

Statistical assumptions for regression are not addressed

Participant inclusion criteria need clarification

Data collection procedures lack sufficient detail for replication

Key Takeaways of Using **JARS** as an Instructional Tool at the Graduate & Doctoral Level



Enhances Research Skills

Improves critical thinking and methodological understanding.



Supports Academic Writing

Guides students in writing structured and rigorous papers.



Prepares for Publication

Helps in crafting manuscripts that meet journal standards.



Boosts Confidence

Builds confidence in conducting and presenting research.



Facilitates Critical Analysis

Encourages deeper analysis and evaluation of studies.



Empowering Graduate & Doctoral Students
for Research Excellence



Thank you!

If you have further questions or comments,
please continue adding them to the chat or contact us
at **apajournals@apa.org**

Stay tuned for future JARS webinars!

Additional resources

Webpages

- [JARS Quantitative](#)
- [JARS Qualitative](#)
- [JARS Mixed Methods](#)
- [JARS Race, Ethnicity, and Culture](#)
- [JARS Glossary](#)
- [APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)

Newsletters

- [APA Style](#)
- [APA Publishing Insider](#)

Books

- [*Reporting Qualitative Research in Psychology*](#)
Heidi M. Levitt
- [*Reporting Quantitative Research in Psychology*](#)
Harris Cooper

