Overview

How is qualitative research conducted? In this course, you will develop and hone the skills of a qualitative researcher, including designing research studies; creating interview guides and focus group protocols; conducting interviews, focus groups, and observations; developing and applying a codebook; doing thematic and content analyses; and writing a methodology section. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Work in groups to design a qualitative research study and justify design decisions
- Apply varied methods for collecting qualitative data and reflect on their merits
- Transcribe and code qualitative data and reflect on choices in transcription and coding
- Analyze qualitative data using content and thematic analysis
- Identify criteria for assessing rigor in qualitative research
- Write a thorough and compelling methodology section for a grant or paper

Resources


Selected articles in Canvas, some required, some recommended as supplementary resources.

Responsibilities

- **Attendance**: Attendance at all class sessions (particularly the first) is mandatory; please sign in on the computer outside the classroom. If you must miss a class session, talk to one of the course instructors about how you can make up the work.

- **Participation**: Much of the value of this class will come from discussion, so please come prepared to ask questions and participate actively. Participation is worth 20% of your grade.

- **Reading**: There will be reading assignments from the Patton textbook as well as selected methodological articles. Please complete these readings *before* class and come prepared to discuss them.

- **Homework**: There are 4 homework assignments for this class, each of which gives you hands-on practice with a key component of qualitative research. All homework assignments should be submitted via Canvas on the date indicated. Please come prepared to discuss the
assignment during the following class period. Each assignment is worth 15% of your overall grade. Students will lose ½ a grade per day for work that is turned in late.

- **Final Exam:** For your final exam, you will write the Methods and Results section for an article, using the research question your team chose for this course, but fleshing it out as a real research study. This exam is worth 20% of your overall grade.

If you anticipate problems concerning an upcoming deadline, please consult with the course directors to determine whether alternative arrangements are possible. All assignments must be completed to receive credit and a final grade for the course.

**Grading**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Academic Integrity Policy**

Students in this course are expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity (http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy.
Assignment 1: Interview Guide

In small groups, identify a mutually interesting and easily accessible research question. Working together, craft an interview guide. Note: You will begin this assignment in class to facilitate coordination of teams, but can continue outside class time if necessary. One member of your group should submit your interview guide for the team. Please include all team members’ names on your submitted work. Your team should submit:

1. **Framing language**, including what the research is about, how long the interview is likely to take, and an explanation of confidentiality and ground rules.
2. **Interview questions** and follow-up prompts guided by best practices in interviewing (10 questions minimum plus prompts.)
3. **Margin notes** explaining why you chose to ask particular questions as you did, including issues you weighed when crafting your questions, wording you considered and rejected, etc.

Assignment 2: Interview and Transcription

(Note: You have two weeks to complete this assignment but it’s fairly involved, so start early!)

For this assignment, you will conduct and audio record two interviews. One should be an individual interview; the other can be either a:

- **Second individual interview** (if the topic is sensitive and you don’t want to interview subjects together) or
- **Group interview** (2 or more people; this is excellent experience for moderating focus groups)

Immediately after each interview, reflect on the interview experience. Before beginning to write, think about the following questions (you do not have to answer every one.)

Questions:

- What was challenging or uncomfortable for you?
- What was interesting or unexpected?
- Which questions worked well? Which didn’t? Why?
- How did your own behavior (body language, vocal tone, verbal responses) affect the interview?
- Would you adjust your approach in future interviews?
- How would you revise the questions?
- When did the interviewee seem most/least comfortable?
- Which of your own behaviors did the interviewee seem to respond to well or poorly?
Also, transcribe one of your interviews in full (you can leave out ice-breaker questions if you think the responses aren’t relevant to your research question.) Feel free to use a free software program such as Otter, but be sure to double-check and clean up the transcript.

Please submit:

(1) Your reflection
(2) Your transcription

Assignment 3: Draft Codebook

Collect your group’s transcripts and read through them. With your original research question firmly in mind, develop a preliminary codebook, focusing on at least 10 parent codes (e.g., barriers to care) and 10 child codes (e.g., barriers_transportation, barriers_cost, barriers_childcare.) In your codebook, include your list of codes, a description of what each code means, and when it should and shouldn’t be applied. Please submit:

(1) Your draft codebook.
(2) A brief reflection (one paragraph is sufficient) on what you found interesting or challenging about the process of creating a code book

Assignment 4: Preliminary Thematic Analysis

After meeting with your team in class to reconcile your codebooks, use the codebook you have finalized (either together or individually) to code all the transcriptions from your team. After doing your coding, identify 3 possible themes that the data seem to suggest. Please submit:

(1) Your coded transcripts
(2) Your three themes and an explanation of how you arrived at them

At a glance...

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<tr>
<td>Assignment 1: Interview Guide</td>
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<td>Assignment 2: Interview and Transcription</td>
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# COURSE SCHEDULE

## Session 1: Introduction

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Describe the goals, focus, and format of the course
- Brainstorm a qualitative research question
- Refine research questions using FINER criteria

No required reading

Optional/supplementary reading:

## Session 2: Creating an Interview Guide

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Discuss characteristics of good interview questions
- Identify a range of question types
- Identify pitfalls in question writing
- Identify information for the framing language

Required reading:
- Patton, pages 432-456

Optional/supplementary reading:

## Session 3: Conducting an Interview
At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
  • Discuss methods for conducting qualitative interviews
  • Identify common challenges and pitfalls in interviewing and how to address them
  • Discuss methods for achieving empathic neutrality
  • Discuss choices in interviewing (e.g., phone/face-to-face, record/don’t record)

Required reading:
  • Patton, pages 457-474

Optional/supplementary reading:
  • Interviewing Skills for Qualitative Researchers. GradHacker. https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/interviewing-skills-qualitative-research

Session 4: Running a Focus Group

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
  • Explain the pros and cons of focus groups for collecting data
  • Describe the logistics of setting up and running a focus group
  • Discuss the roles played by the moderator and the note-taker
  • Discuss how to write about using focus groups

Required reading:
  • Patton, pp. 477-479

Optional/supplementary reading:
  • Tausch AP & Menold N. 2016. Methodological aspects of focus groups in health research: Results of qualitative interviews with focus group moderators. Global Qualitative Nursing Research. 3:1-12.
Session 5: Transcribing and Codebook Development

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Discuss the time, effort, and budget required for transcription
- Weigh choices in transcription style
- Identify the stages of data analysis
- Identify the components of a qualitative codebook
- Distinguish between deductive and inductive approaches to coding

Required reading:


Optional/supplementary reading:


Session 6: Coding Qualitative Data

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

- Apply a codebook to qualitative data
- Discuss coding styles (e.g., lumping and splitting) and the pros and cons of each
- Discuss techniques for applying a codebook (e.g., taking passes, assigning units)
- Discuss strategies for coming to consensus on a codebook

Required reading:


Optional/supplemental reading:

Session 7: Conducting Content and Thematic Analysis

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Describe how inductive and deductive approaches affect analytical findings
- Distinguish between content analysis and thematic analysis
- Identify features of well-constructed themes
- Discuss how to write about content and thematic analysis

Required reading:

Optional/supplementary reading:

Session 8: Writing Your Methods Section

At the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:
- Discuss COREQ checklist
- Write reviewer comments
- Respond to reviewer comments
- Identify information to include in a methods section

Required reading:

Optional/supplementary reading: