

NUTR 809
Applied Qualitative Research Methods
Spring 2014

Class Time: Tuesday 2-4 pm
Class Location: TBA

Instructors: Margaret Bentley, 130 Rosenau, pbentley@unc.edu
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Office hours: by appointment

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to qualitative research methods with an emphasis on their use in nutrition-related program design and evaluation. The course will use a combination of didactic, interactive and applied techniques to teach knowledge and skills relevant to qualitative research. This is an introductory course by design and additional coursework in qualitative methods, particularly data analysis, is strongly recommended for those students who want to conduct qualitative research.

Students will work individually and in small groups on a series of assignments that will give them exposure to some of the key methods in qualitative research, including key informant and in-depth interviews, unstructured and structured observational methods, and focus group discussions. Students will also learn how to read data interpretively and to use software (Atlas-ti) to code transcripts for analysis. Students will be evaluated on their assignments and their class participation.

Course Goals and Objectives:

The goal of this course is to develop skills in how to formulate qualitative research questions for nutrition research; how to collect qualitative data using interview, focus group and observational methods; and how to carry out qualitative data analysis.

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Become familiar with the paradigms that are frequently used in qualitative research.
2. Develop a research plan and research questions.
3. Conduct in-depth interviews and observations.
4. Create and use a qualitative coding scheme.
5. Analyze a dataset and prepare a data display matrix.
6. Prepare a presentation based on analysis of the data collected in this class.

Course Text: There is one primary textbook for the course, “Qualitative methods in public health: a field guide for applied research” by Priscilla Ulin, Elizabeth Robinson and Elizabeth Tolley. These will be complemented with other readings available on Sakai.

We will provide you with a copy of *Rapid Assessment Procedures (RAP): ethnographic methods to investigate women’s health* by Joel Gittlesohn, Pertti Pelto, Margaret Bentley, Karabi Bhattacharrya, and Joan Jensen

Sakai: The syllabus, slides for class, and other course material are posted on Sakai.

CITI Training requirement: All students in the course are required to have completed CITI Human Subjects Training. Information on completing the training can be found at the CITI website: <http://www.citiprogram.org/default.asp?language=english>. Please complete the training by January 21st. Once you have completed the training (or if you have completed it in the past) please email a copy of the certificate to Valerie Flax for our records.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Assignments	Proportion of grade	Due Date	Group or Individual
Research Framework, Questions & Interview Guide	15%	February 4	Group
In-depth interview transcript	10%	February 18	Individual
Self-critique of second interview transcript	15%	March 4	Individual
Observation: Unstructured and Structured	15%	March 25	Individual
Data analysis: Codebook & Display Matrix	15%	April 8	Group
In-class presentations	20%	April 15	Group
Class participation and lead discussion of one article	10%	-	Individual

Assignments:

There are several assignments throughout the semester, some of which you will do individually and some as a group, including a final presentation of your research project on a specific nutrition-related topic. On the first day of class, January 7, we will brainstorm and select research topics and divide the class into small groups. On the second day of class, January 14, you will start working in your groups to begin developing your research plan and questions. To limit the amount of time you spend outside of class meeting with your group, we will give you some class time to work in your groups throughout the semester. Each group member will interview two individuals and do one structured and one unstructured observation. Individual interviews and observations will be read and graded separately, but the group work requires that you aggregate your data for analysis, interpretation, and identification of patterns. The final group project will be a detailed Powerpoint of the entire project, including your framework, research plan, methods, data analysis, and results. Please include your name and your group name both in the name of your document (e.g., Rodriguez food truck group interview 1.doc) and at the top of the first page of the document.

The instructors will try to give feedback on assignments in a timely manner so that you can take their comments into consideration before moving to the next step in the process of data collection and analysis.

Samples of different assignments are posted on Sakai.

1. Research questions and interview guide (15%)

Your group will work together to select a research topic. Based on the aims of your research and existing literature, you will develop research questions and an in-depth interview guide. (5 points for research questions, 10 points for interview guide)

2. In-depth interview transcript (10%)

You are expected to conduct a total of 2 in-depth interviews. For this assignment, conduct the first interview only. You will do a word-for-word transcription of your interview and submit it. We will look for use of open-ended questions, good probes, and rich responses from the interviewee. We recognize that not everyone is a good respondent, but a good interviewer can usually get a reasonable amount of information by using good interviewing techniques. We will take lack of previous interviewing experience into consideration in grading the first interviews. (10 points for transcript)

3. Self-critique of second interview transcript (15%)

Using the feedback you received on your first interview, you will conduct a second interview with another person. Transcribe this interview and write comments in the margins about your interviewing skills (for example, leading question, missed probe, good probe, double-barreled question, etc.). We would like you to include two paragraphs at the end of the transcript where you critique your interviewing skills and reflect on the process of data collection and your role in it. (7.5 points for interview, 7.5 points for self-critique)

4. Unstructured and structured observation (15%)

You will conduct two observations related to your research aims. The first will be an unstructured observation where you will take notes during the observation. The second will be a structured observation. You will develop a structured observation datasheet with your group and each group member will use it to conduct one observation. You will submit the notes from your unstructured observation and the datasheet from your structured observation. When you submit the assignment, please include 2 paragraphs reflecting on the process of collecting observation data and your role in the process. (5 points for unstructured observation, 5 points for structured observation, 5 points for reflection)

5. Data analysis: codebook & display matrix (15%)

To analyze your data, you will work with your group to develop a set of codes. The codes could be topical, based on themes, or based on a social theory. The codebook should include the names of the codes and their definitions. After coding the data, develop at least one display matrix as part of your analysis. Although the assignment is done by the group, individual group members should also submit 2 paragraphs reflecting on the process of creating codes and a matrix and your role in the process as a researcher. (5 points for codebook, 5 points for display matrix, 5 points for reflection)

6. In-class presentation (20%)

Using the data collected by group members and the analysis carried out by the group, prepare a presentation that describes your framework, research plan, methods, and results. Include a

discussion of the importance your findings to public health/nutrition. Please ensure that all group members have a chance to present.

7. Class participation and lead discussion of one article (10%)

You are expected to attend class, participate in group assignments, and actively participate in discussions. We will ask each student to work with a partner to lead a class discussion (approx. 15 min) of one of the assigned articles. (5 points for leading discussion, 5 points for class participation)

Grading:

The grading scheme for determining final course grades is as follows:

H = 92-100

P = 65-91

L = 0-64

January 14 Introduction to the course and to qualitative research methods

Goals:

1. To review the syllabus and discuss the assignments.
2. To introduce the basic principles of qualitative research methods, discuss how qualitative methods compare to quantitative methods, and identify when qualitative methods appropriate to use in research

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter Two: The Language and Logic of Qualitative Research
- Bentley ME, Dee DL, and Jensen JL. (2003). Breastfeeding among low-income African-American women: power, beliefs and decision making. *Journal of Nutrition* 133:305S-309S.

January 21 Developing a research plan and formulating qualitative research questions

Goals:

1. To identify types of research topics that are appropriate to explore qualitatively.
2. To discuss different perspectives on the use of theories and conceptual frameworks in qualitative research.
3. To clarify how research questions and intervention questions differ.
4. To identify different types of interview questions.
5. To allow groups to meet and begin planning your research.

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter 3: Designing the Study (pp. 33-49).
- Pelto GH and Armar-Klemesu M. (2011). Balancing nurturance, cost and time: complementary feeding in Accra, Ghana. *Maternal and Child Nutrition* 7:66-81.

January 28 Observational Methods I: Overview of Observational Methods

Goals:

1. To discuss the different types of observations that can be conducted.
2. To review how researchers select an event/situation/actors to observe.
3. To discuss how researchers collect data during an observation and how observation data is used in analysis.
4. To allow groups to meet to plan your unstructured observation.

Assigned Readings:

- Bentley ME et al. (1994). Use of structured observations in the study of health behavior. IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, The Hague, Netherlands (pp. 19-29).
- Gittelsohn J, Thapa M, Landman LT. (1997). Cultural factors, caloric intake and micronutrient sufficiency in rural Nepali households. *Social Science and Medicine*, 44:1739-1749.

February 4 Key Informant and In-Depth Interviews

Goals:

1. To discuss different sampling strategies for qualitative research studies.
2. To discuss what constitutes a good qualitative study participant.
3. To review ways of building rapport with informants while still remaining objective enough to ask useful questions.
4. To discuss reflexivity in qualitative research.
5. To practice interviewing on videotape and receive feedback

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter 4: Collecting Qualitative Data: The Science and the Art (pp.71-89)
- Delaney M and McCarthy MB. (2014). Saints, sinners and non-believers: the moral space of food. A qualitative exploration of beliefs and perspectives on healthy eating of Irish adults aged 50-70. *Appetite* 73:105-113.

February 11 Interview Techniques: Probing, Active Listening

Goals:

1. To review what probes are, why they are critical to data collection, and how to use them effectively.
2. To discuss the meaning of active listening, why it is important in qualitative interviews, and how to develop active listening skills.
3. To practice interviewing on videotape and receive feedback

Assigned Readings:

- Spradley J. (1979). Chapter 4: Asking Descriptive Questions. In *The Ethnographic Interview*, Harcourt, Brace, Janovich.
- Macdiarmid JJ, Loe J, Kyle J, McNeill G. (2013). "It was an education in portion size". Experience of eating a healthy diet and barriers to long term dietary change. *Appetite* 71:411-419.

Optional (this is another resource if you want more guidance on questions and interviewing techniques);

- Patton MQ. (1990). Chapter 7: Qualitative interviewing. In *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage (pp.290-335).

February 18 Observational Methods II: Structured Observations

Eric Hodges will be the guest speaker.

Goals:

1. To review different uses for structured observations in nutrition research.
2. To go through an example of using structured observation of videotaped data.
3. To practice coding using a structured observation form.
4. To allow groups to meet to design your observational datasheet.

Assigned Readings:

- Benjamin Neelon SE et al. (2012). Nutrition practices and mealtime environments of North Carolina child care centers. *Childhood Obesity* 8:216-223.

February 25 Focus Group Discussions

Goals:

1. To discuss when it is appropriate to use focus group discussions rather than interviews or observations.
2. To review steps for planning focus group discussions and skills required to moderate focus groups.
3. To discuss how to design a focus group discussion guide and how this might be different from an interview guide.

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter 4: Collecting Qualitative Data (pp. 89-95)
- Ulin: Appendix 6: Topic Guides for Focus Group Discussions on Reproductive Health
- Ulin: Appendix 8: Common Errors in Moderating Focus Groups
- Drummond M and Drummond C. (2013). My dad's a 'barbie' man and my mum's the cooking girl: Boys and the social construction of food and nutrition. *Journal of Child Health Care* doi: 10.1177/1367493513508846.

March 4 Data Management and Data Analysis I: Overview of the process

Session on the use of Dedoose qualitative data analysis software

Goals:

1. To review strategies for managing qualitative data.
2. To provide an overview of the qualitative analysis process.
3. To discuss the goals of qualitative analysis.

4. To review the common steps involved in qualitative data analysis.

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter 5: Logistics in the field (pp. 125-128)
- Ulin: Chapter 6: Qualitative Data Analysis (pp. 139-159)
- Beck et al. (2013). Understanding how Latino parents choose beverages to serve to infants and toddlers. *Maternal and Child Health Journal* doi: 10.1007/s10995-013-1364-0

SPRING BREAK

March 18 Data Analysis II: Coding/Themes

Goals:

1. To discuss what coding means in qualitative research.
2. To review different types of codes and how one goes about the process of coding.
3. To discuss identification of themes in qualitative data.
4. To allow groups to meet and work on codes for your data.

Assigned Readings:

- Saldana J. (2009). Chapter 1: An introduction to codes and coding. In *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks: Sage (pp. 1-31) – skip the part about CAQDAS coding
- Fraser et al. (2013). Patients' perceptions of their general practitioner's health and weight influences their perceptions of nutrition and exercise advice received. *Journal of Primary Health Care* 5:301-307.

March 25 Data Analysis III: Matrix Development

Goals:

1. To discuss the purpose of matrices in qualitative analysis.
2. To review ways to set up comparisons in a matrix.
3. To allow groups to meet and begin developing a matrix using your data.

Assigned Readings:

- Miles MB and Huberman AM. (1994). Chapter 9: Matrix displays: some rules of thumb. In *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage (pp. 239-244)
- Flax V. (2013). "It was caused by the carelessness of the parents": cultural models of child malnutrition in Malawi. *Maternal and Child Nutrition*

Optional (this provides more guidance on making comparisons and data analysis in qualitative research):

- Gibbs G. (2007). Chapter 6: Comparative analysis. In *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage (pp. 73-89)

April 1 **Writing and representation in qualitative research: Telling the story of your data**

Goals:

1. To discuss the writing, argumentation, and representation in qualitative analysis.
2. To provide an overview of the use of numbers and tables in the presentation of qualitative data.

Assigned Readings:

- Ulin: Chapter 7: Putting it into words: reporting qualitative research results
- Sandelowski M. (2001). Real qualitative researchers do not count: the use of numbers in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing and Health*, 24:230-240.
- Rodriguez J et al. (2013). Cooking, Healthy Eating, Fitness and Fun (CHEFFs): Qualitative evaluation of a nutrition education program for children living at urban family homeless shelters. *American Journal of Public Health* 103:S361-S367.

April 8 **Formative and process research: Applications of Qualitative Data**

Amy Corneli will be the guest speaker.

Goals:

1. To introduce students to the formative research process.
2. To discuss how to use qualitative methods as part of formative data collection.

Assigned Readings:

- Corneli AL et al. (2006). Involving communities in the design of clinical trials protocols: the BAN study in Lilongwe, Malawi. *Contemporary Clinical Trials* 28:59-67.

April 15 **Final presentations**

April 22 **Guest Lecture**

Beth Hopping (PhD student in nutrition) and Megan Pera (BSPH student in nutrition) will give a presentation on their research in the Galapagos Islands.