

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course title: Interview, focus group and content analysis

Aim of the course

To provide an understanding of research issues and skills in qualitative research methods in psychology: interview, focus groups

To gain experience in qualitative research methods in the field, carrying out initial observations in projects relevant to domains of students' interests.

To gain introductory experience in analysis, interpretation, and writing based on field data.

Learning outcome, competences

Theoretical skills

- Students should be able to discuss qualitative versus quantitative research: What are the strength and weaknesses, appropriate areas of application, are they complementary? Is there a clear line of distinction?
- Students should be able to describe various types or varieties of qualitative studies (e.g. ethnography, action research, case study, grounded theory).
- Students should know some facts about their theoretical basis and the history of emergence, and be able to describe their emphasis, suitable area of application as well as strength and weaknesses (problems, limitations).
- This also goes for the methods – you should be able to argue for their strengths and weaknesses, and how they are crafted together.
- Also, students should understand what the three different research paradigms in psychology imply (positivism, interpretivism, critical research).

Practical skills

- For various types of empirical material (interviews, observations, photos, documents, notes) you should know how to collect and how to approach it (suitable ways of organizing, handling, and analyzing).
- Students should also be able to describe and discuss the status or role you assign to the data collected in various ways, as well as discuss how you can generalize from data in sensible ways.
- Students should also be able to reflect on issues of quality, both with regard to reliability of the material and validity of analysis and interpretation (in general and with respect to concrete data collection methods).
- Also, students should be able to reflect on your own positioning / agenda and how it shapes your study.
- Which challenges (practical, methodical, ethical) may you encounter if you gather empirical material from social media, online communities, Internet newsgroups, forums or blogs?

Ethic

- What are relevant regulatory (legal) and ethical factors to consider when collecting data?
- What does Your country/home institution's legislation say in relation to collection of personal and sensitive information?

Research design

- You should know what elements a research proposal should contain, and you should be able to write one.

- Given a case description and a research question, you should be able to choose, describe and justify how you would approach the study, including the specific method(s) you will employ.
- The kinds of material you will collect, and the object, sample, population, and/or site of study should also be sensibly chosen and argued for.
- You should be able to describe/evaluate another research study, how it is motivated, whether the chosen approach is well linked to the research question, whether the empirical material is well suited to address the research question, etc.

Teaching and learning methods

Students will receive formal instruction on specific methods and will be set practical exercises associated with these. Workshops will consist of lecture-style delivery of material, as well as practical exercises and discussion groups.

Throughout these, students will receive guidance from a senior qualitative methodologist, with additional experienced qualitative researchers assisting in analysis exercises.

Content of the course

Date	Topic	Tasks
09.11.	Principals of qualitative research design	
09.18.	The research position and epistemology in qualitative research	
09.25.	OFFICIAL HOLIDAY	
10.02.	Principals of observation	1. Analysis of the observation in the movie „ Kitchen Stories “, Bent Hamer (2003)
10.09.	Managing notes and memos	2. Passive observation, field work offline or online
10.16.	Interviews in Psychology	3. Interviewing exercise
10.23. (invited guest)	Interviews in Psychology	
10.30	FALL HOLIDAY	
11.06.	Focus groups	4. Designing a focus group study
11.13.	Data analysis in qualitative research, content analysis practice	5. Analyzing the interviews
11.20	Content analysis practice	
11.27.	Practice of CAQDAS (Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software) packages	6. Analyzing the data with CAQDAS
12.04	Current dilemmas and research in qualitative psychology	7. Final essay
12.11.	Evaluation of the essays, closing of the course	

Evaluation of outcomes

Learning requirements, mode of evaluation, criteria of evaluation:

requirements

- The attendance of the classes is compulsory (max. 3 missing)
- Active participation on the classes
- 6 of the 7 assessments. These assessments will cover the main required qualitative research skills: data gathering, analysis and critical evaluation of research studies.
- Grades: 5 Excellent to 1 failed.

Reading list

Compulsory reading list

Willig, Carla (2008) *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. ADVENTURES IN THEORY AND METHOD*. Open University Press.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). pp. 77-101. ISSN 1478-0887

Christina Silver and Ann Lewis (2014) *Using Software in Qualitative Research a step-by-step guide* Sage.

Dan P McAdams

<https://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/instruments/interview/>