Qualitative interviewing – data collection and analysis (PS1FT62)

PhD programme, VT23
Dept of Psychology
Stockholm University

Course leader: Charlotte Alm
Overarching purpose and content

The purpose of the course is to give advanced theoretical and applied knowledge within the area qualitative research interviews. The course is especially focused on interpersonal processes in the interview situation. The course gives advanced competency in the application of qualitative interview methods as a data collection instrument, including strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations in qualitative studies, transcription of interview data, as well as interpretation and analysis of interview data.

Study goals

A passing grade on the course requires that the students:

- understand, analyze, discuss, compare and apply theories and models presented during the course
- show advanced competency in the application of qualitative interview methods in association with data collection
- show insights concerning ethical considerations that relate to data collection as well as to management and processing of data
- plan and conduct data collection through qualitative interviews
- transcribe interview data and conduct data analysis

Course activities

The course covers theoretical and applied aspects on qualitative interviews in particular research interviews. The course includes strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations, construction of an interview guide, conducting, transcribing and analyzing interview data. Also, it includes recorded interviews as well as psychological aspects on the interview situation. The course activities consist of lectures, seminars and work-shops, interview exercises and data collection under supervision. Attendance on all course activities is mandatory.

Course activities related to the interview work

During the course the course participants will in depth explore qualitative interview and its possibilities as a data collection method. The interview course activities start in association with the course introduction when smaller groups are formed (2-4 course participants/interview group), followed by a lecture on quality in qualitative interviews which focuses on the two approaches Thematic Analysis (TA) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). During this lecture we will also prepare for choice of subjects for the interviews. After this, a seminar focusing on the choice of subjects for the interviews with the small interview group and supervisor will be conducted. Participants will also start working individually on their separate interview guides. The purpose,
research question(s) and interview guide including presentation of the subject and frames are to be uploaded at Athena no later than the time specified in the schedule. The supervisor should approve of the content of this document before the interviews are commenced; revisions may be needed before it is approved of. An additional lecture focusing on methods and ethical considerations will be given after the choice of subjects’ seminar.

**Ethical considerations**

Research ethics in particular concerning qualitative interview methodology will be covered during the lecture on methods and ethical considerations. Well in advance of each interview these ethical aspects are to be communicated to the respondent in writing e.g. through text message or email using the document "Ethics & frames” on Athena. This is done so that an informed consent in the form of a response to the text message or email, can be collected. An informed consent means that the respondent receives information about what it means to be a respondent in this particular study and which they have a chance to say yes or no to before being included in the interview. At the beginning of the interview this information is to be given again so that the respondent’s informed consent is recorded as part of the interview for learning and examination purposes. The ethical aspects are presented within what is called the frames and which introduces the actual interview together with a presentation of the interviewer and the purpose of the interview. Ethical issues are to be dealt with on an ongoing basis during the interview and can therefore be subject to the feedback when it is processed within the interview group. Such aspects can involve that the interviewer poses questions about things that are not part of the agreement about the contents of the interview etc.

Please note that the frames including the ethical aspects are to be given exactly as they are formulated in the document “Ethics & frames” once they have been adopted appropriately to the specific study and interview occasion. The interviewer should therefore read them out loud in the beginning of the interview to make sure that all ethical aspects are informed about.

**Confidentiality**

Conducting the interviews on the course requires that course participants both interview and are interviewed as well as take part of other participants’ interviews. In addition, the feedback process requires a sensitivity regarding how information is conveyed and handled. Even though the interview is to avoid ethically sensitive subjects, taken together this means that information related to interviews and feedback occasions are to be kept confidential. More specific, the information is not to be spread outside of the supervision and the interview group, recorded interviews are to be erased permanently after the course is finished and feedback occasions are not to be recorded or shared with third party. Course participants are to hand in a signed agreement with the confidentiality statement to the course leader before they can conduct interviews (the document can be found on the planning for the introduction at Athena).

**Interviews**

There are in total four interviews, each 15 minutes including the frame, included in the course. The interviewer is responsible for keeping the time and for making sure that the interview questions in the interview guide are covered adequately. Make sure that both interviewer and interviewee are seated in a place where they are not disturbed. Due to confidentiality, other people are not to be able to take part of the interview. It is possible to use headset/head phones (but please see below
about recording in Zoom). The recording time is scheduled, but it is possible to conduct the interviews another time when it comes to interviews 1, 2 and 3 (however make sure to first receive feedback on an interview before recording the next one). Interview 4 must however be recorded the time specified in the schedule.

Course participants may recruit their own respondents for all four interviews (not family members, close relative or friend). If the subject permits they can instead interview course participants (different for different interviews and not from the own interview group). If so, the course leader needs to be informed well in advance in order to schedule respondents among course participants.

Each interview will be played and analyzed within the interview group and together with the supervisor. Note that interview 3 is played and analyzed within the group only, that is without the supervisor. A transcription of interview 3 together with a reflection about the own interview (about 1 A4-page) is to be uploaded on Athena for the supervisor to approve of (see schedule for deadline). It is expected that the course participants learn from all interviews and apply insights into each new interview. This process is an important foundation for the knowledge progression throughout the course. Interviews are therefore not to be conducted before all previously conducted interviews have been given feedback. All participants in the interview group are expected to be active (listening – reflecting) during the entire feedback occasion, also in connection with the other participants’ interviews.

Recording device
Interviews conducted in Zoom can be recorded with digital recording device that can be borrowed by the course leader or by the interviewer's cell phone, or through the recording function in Zoom. If the latter is chosen make sure to only save the audio and not the video file. Do a recording test before each interview to check that the technique is working and that the sound quality is sufficient to be able to hear what is being said.

Transcription of interviews
Interview 3 is transcribed as part of the material for the supervisor to approve of (see above). For the examination task, two transcribed interviews (each judged by supervisor to be of passing quality) are to be attached and used for an analysis of the data. It is possible to choose interview 3 as one of these two interviews.

One chapter from the book by Steinar Kvale about qualitative method concerning transcription is available at Athena. Bear in mind that it may take about an hour to transcribe 15 minutes of interview material. The transcription is to be verbatim (word-by-word) which means that all words uttered by both interviewer and interviewee are to be written down. Indicate ongoing who is saying what (e.g. R = respondent, I = Interviewer). For the purpose of this course it is however not necessary to write in spoken language, write repetitions of words and letters etc if they do not fill a function for instance if an interviewee emphasize the importance of something and therefore repeat it. Do include filler word such as eh and um, note silences (e.g. with three dots ...) and note laughter, clears throat etc. to the extent that these things are possible to hear in the audio tracks. An example of a transcribed statement from a respondent is given below. Note how some information about the respondent has been removed since it might identify them (the place where they work). Such
information should be removed in the transcription and also when providing quotes when writing up the results. Here, R stands for respondent.

R When I looked down at my cell phone ... it became like a reflex, it was like I saw myself exactly then and there and I realized that I didn’t ehh really need to go in there [the name of the company where the respondent work].

When giving quotes from an interview make sure to use a system that makes it possible to find the quote in the transcription. For instance, give each respondent a pseudonym, state on which page and which row number the quote is to be found: 4: 23-24. In Word this is done through Insert --> Page number and Layout --> Page number --> Start over for each page.

All interview files are to be erased as soon as the course is finished.

Information about our course quality work
We continuously work on securing the quality in our education. On part of this work is that we, with the consent of the course participants, save interview 4 for analyses of the supervisors’ work and evaluations. This work is done completely separate from the evaluation of the students’ work and has the sole purpose of developing supervisor competency and work with course quality. Interviews are saved only with participant’s consent which are given both prior to and after interview 4 has been conducted. This is entirely voluntary and those that have consented have the right to withdraw their consent at any time and request without any consequences to have their interview deleted. The interviews will be saved at Stockholm University GDPR-safe cloud service where only teachers working on course quality for this course have access. The interviews will be deleted after 1,5 years since we work continuously with these issues and as part of that work use current supervisor work as a starting point.

Format of the course

Most activities on the course are given on site at campus, specifically all activities in the whole class including all lectures and work-shops. Please note there will not be possible to attend digitally on any of these activities. The first two of the four interview feedback occasions are given in Zoom in order to provide a progression in terms of the learning process. Specifically, analyzing audio recorded interviews in the beginning of the course means we can direct full attention towards aspects related to the contents of the interviews. For ethical reasons – since we listen to and process interviews – course participants are to use their own screen and headset/in a secluded place where third party can not take part of the meeting. The last interview feedback occasion – interview 4 – will be conducted on site at the department’s own TV-studio equipped with video recording devices in separate interview rooms. Turning from audio to video recorded interviews in the latter part of the course means we broaden the interview feedback situation to include also interpersonal aspects that are otherwise are not observable. Interview 3 is processed and given feedback without the supervisor present and can be conducted in the format which suits both interviewer and interviewee best, either face-to-face or through Zoom.
Course requirements/mandatory parts

The following are course requirement/mandatory parts:

- Written exam in the form of a take-home exam which is handed in before deadline in accordance with the course leader’s instructions.
- Taking part in the interview exercises requires fully provided attendance on activities that concern ethical aspects as well as choices of subject.
- Fully provided attendance makes out requirements in order for the student to take part in the written examination, more specific at least 3 of 4 interviews are to be evaluated by the supervisor as of passing quality.

Students with a maximum of one interview of non-passing quality can in consultation with the supervisor and the course leader do a compensatory task during the course period. A maximum of one missed lectures, seminars and workshops can be compensated through specific tasks in consultation with the course leader. Please note that missed interview feedback sessions can not be compensated.

A document including purpose, research questions, frame and interview guide must be submitted before the deadline. If submitted after the deadline, interview 1 is to be conducted at a later time than the one scheduled. The reason for this is that the document must be approved of before the student can start interviewing. A late submission means that the feedback is given at the earliest during the feedback occasion for interview 2. It is still mandatory to take part in the feedback session for interview 1. Submission after deadline of the transcription of interview 3 (including the reflection of the own interview) renders an additional task to be completed. This task can be retrieved from the course leader.

Plagiarism, cheating and unallowed cooperation

It is a part of the responsibility as a student to be aware of the rules that concern examination. More detailed information can be found on the webpage of Stockholm University (see under the heading Plagiarism and regulations for disciplinary matters): Your rights and responsibility. Teachers are required to report suspected plagiarism to the principle and the Disciplinary Council. Plagiarism and cheating are always disciplinary cases and may lead to suspension of education. One example of plagiarism is to word-by-word or almost word-by-word copy a text (even occasional sentences) regardless of whether a source is given or not. This applies also to own previous texts (self-plagiarism) and translations from one language to another. One example of cheating is to use unallowed aids and resources such as using the help of another person or letting another person write the exam, search or use information on the Internet or in course text books in an exam where such resources are not permitted. To study in groups with other students is often rewarding and time
saving, but when it comes to examination tasks it is important to work alone (unless otherwise stated in exam instructions) in order to avoid unallowed cooperation.

**Examination**

The course is examined through active and satisfactory participation in workshops, interview exercises, data collection under supervision, and through a written take-home-exam and submission of transcriptions of interviews of passing quality.

An individual take-home exam is the basis for the final course grade and is made available at the end of the course and. The exam is to be uploaded on Athena before deadline according to schedule and will then be checked for plagiarism. Exams that are uploaded after deadline will not be evaluated and given the grade Fx. The exam is made up of an analysis of two interviews of passing quality and which is presented according to instructions. It also includes a number of essay-type questions regarding interview method requiring reasoning based on course content explicitly shown by ongoing references to course literature.

The interviews are to be uploaded in a separate box on Athena before the same deadline as the exam. They are to be devoid of possible identifying information. Quotes from the transcriptions are to be used to illustrate results and reasoning. It should be made explicit from where in the transcripts the quotes are taken. References with page numbers (but all else should be according to APA) to the course book by Patton (2015) should be made ongoing, in addition to at least one reference to one of the articles covered in the course. The course book is the primary source for this task, but lectures and seminars can also be referenced. Do not refer to information in the course that comes from other participants’ interviews or the like.

**Literature**


All chapters are included except ch 4 (practical and actionable qualitative applications) and ch 6 (fieldwork strategies and observation methods).

**Other literature (NOTE this list can be updated up until the course starts)**


**Reference litterature and other resources (non-mandatory)**


Website with many good IPA-resources: http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk.ezp.sub.su.se/

Website with many good TA-resources: https://www.thematicanalysis.net/
Grading criteria

The evaluation of the take-home-exam will be the basis for the final course grade on a scale of either pass or fail. In order to pass the course the exam is to receive a passing grade and course requirements need to be fulfilled. Exams that are uploaded after the deadline will not be evaluated and given the grade Fx. It is possible to compensate an Fx-grade at the next examination occasion, meaning such an exam can be uploaded again and re-evaluated and given a passing grade if the quality is of at least passing quality. Compensations for an Fx-exam that are uploaded after deadline are to evaluated and given the grade Fx.

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>78-100</td>
<td>Minimum requirement is that the student with their own words give an account of differences and similarities between central terms, theories and models and can apply central terms on own examples. A higher score, but still of passing quality, also includes that the student reason about the central term’s relevance, drawbacks and validity. An even higher score, but still of passing quality, includes that the student independently makes connections between the central terms, argue and discuss in relation to the course literature and integrates in a commendable way relevant principles and problematizations at a comprehensive theoretical level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>&lt;78</td>
<td>Student does not exhibit expected study goals ranging up to student with their own words give an account of differences and similarities between central terms, theories and models but do not apply central terms.</td>
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