

## SOCL 2211: Guide for the Qualitative Coronavirus Project

*This is a brief overview; further guidance will be offered in class (as well as lectures on qualitative research and your textbook).<sup>1</sup> Please also see the description on the class webpage for other details.*

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As the name implies, qualitative research describes the qualities of things. It is important to provide “thick” (detailed) descriptions of the people and things being studied. Crucially, the main goal of qualitative research goes beyond describing the group being studied. Qualitative research should try to discover or document significant things with regards to the group being studied or the topic being investigated. The goal of this project is to show how the Coronavirus crisis affects different people according to their different circumstances. To do this, you will want to compare and contrast the statements of the different interviewees. Your report should include both detailed, in depth observations, and also a discussion of the context in which each interviewee lives and how it affects him/her.

**COLLECTING DATA.** You will need to find your participants and schedule a time to interview them. Interviews will likely last between 30 to 60 minutes (but they could certainly go longer if you have a talkative interviewee!).

Interviewee (participant) requirements:

- You need 5 participants. They can be your friends and family.
- All participants must be at least age 18.
- At least one person under age 30
- At least one person over age 60.
- At least one man
- At least one woman
- At least one person who is now or was formerly employed full time

(Optional) non-interview data:

- Observations. Your observations may be limited since we’re all (mostly) staying at home. However, your report certainly can include observations you have made about life in the time of the Coronavirus. In addition, you can include observations you make about your participants and their circumstances, but, if you’re not meeting them face-to-face your ability to observe is limited.
- Photos. You are welcome to include relevant photos in your report.

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<sup>1</sup> Another source of assistance is linked on the class webpage. It’s a link titled “Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic”. This document has a lot of good info about conducting qualitative research under our current circumstances. Take a look at the table of contents to see what it covers.

## Before the Interview:

*Important: You should record your interview if you can.* But first, you must obtain the consent of your interviewee, and you need to record this consent. This is true whether you do the interview face-to-face, by phone, or online (e.g., on Zoom). This is especially important on the phone: you must have both your consent and the interviewee's consent, and you should record that consent. We suggest the following procedure for getting and recording consent:

1. First, tell the interviewee that you're going to ask if you can record the interview, and that you want to record their permission. If they refuse, you'll have to decide whether to go forward or find someone else.
2. If they agree to recording the informed consent, tell them you're going to start recording their permission (only), turn on the recorder, and read the informed consent script. If they give permission, you can proceed, still recording. If they agree to some parts, but not others, you're only allowed to do what they agree to. Here again, if you feel it's not enough, you'll have to decide whether to go forward or find someone else.
3. Conduct the interview, or not, according to what they give you permission to do. For instance,
  - a. If they give permissions, you can simply continue to record.
  - b. If they don't give permission, tell them you're stopping the recording of the informed consent, and either proceed if you want to, or find someone else to interview. That choice is up to you.
4. There are no penalties for not recording the interview, esp if the interviewee doesn't agree to that. But if you do an interview, you need to record the consent.

## Recording devices:

- For face-to-face interviews, you can use the recording app on your smartphone.
- For phone interviews, you can download an app that will allow you to record phone calls. We did a little checking, and evidently, while there are apps, it may not be easy to find a good, free one that's easy to use.
  - We googled "phone call recording app," and there were useful pages at [pcmag.com](http://pcmag.com), and [digitaltrends.com](http://digitaltrends.com). But it could be complicated technically.
  - As a more failsafe method, we suggest obtaining a small voice recorder. Search on "audio recorder" on Amazon or Best Buy. You can find one that is not very expensive. We made a list on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3438V9XTCT5GW>
  - If you use an external audio recorder, set your phone to speaker phone, so the audio recorder can pick up the sound.
  - Whatever you choose, remember, you must get both your and the interviewee's permission, and record that permission. Follow the procedures in the previous section.
- For interviews over the Internet, you can conduct them on Zoom and use the record feature. Additionally, *if you are proficient* with other methods of recording your computer audio/video you can use that, e.g., OBS (open broadcaster software).
- Recording will be easiest either face-to-face, or on Zoom. Recording a phone call is potentially more difficult.

- Whatever you choose, test it first with a short recording. It would be a shame to try something that doesn't work.
- Remember, however you do it, you need permissions. Follow the procedures in the previous section.

#### Interview procedure:

1. Test your recording device before the interview to make sure it works. It would be unfortunate to lose an interview due to technical issues!
2. Read the "informed content script" to the participant. As shown on the script, write down what permissions they give. You should ask to record the informed consent part, even if you don't record the interview, as described in the previous section.
3. Use the questions on the "qualitative interview protocol" to interview the participant. If you want to ask a different set of questions, get approval from Dr. Weil and Oliver.
  - a. Note: for the protocol questions, don't just read the text. For example, the protocol says, "1. R's age, gender, race" and you could say, "We're going to start off with a few demographic questions. How old are you?" [wait for response] "and your gender?" [wait for response], "and your race?" [wait for response].
  - b. Note: if a participant's response makes you think of additional questions, feel free to ask those questions. Make note of them, as you may want to ask them in future interviews.
4. After you have finished your questions, thank the participant for their time.
5. Stop recording only after your interaction with the participant is finished. Participants may continue providing valuable responses after you have finished your questions.

#### Naming and uploading your interview media files:

1. When you have saved your recording, please name your interview media files like this:
  - cv (stands for coronavirus) +
  - The date of the interview in the form of YYMMDD, so if you conducted the interview on 4/21/20, you would use 200421 +
  - Your LSU user name, so Mike the Tiger might have mtiger12 +
  - A sequence letter for the interview number they do, so the first one would be "a" the second one "b" and so on, no matter what date.
  - Put all those pieces together with no spaces, and all lower-case letters. So for three interviews on 4/18 and 4/19, with a combination of \*.mp4 and \*.wav files, you might have:
    - cv200418mtiger12a.mp4
    - cv200418mtiger12b.wav
    - cv200419mtiger12c.mp4
2. The first part of the name ("cv200418mtiger12b") will be the interview "code"
3. When you have your interview media files named, please upload them to a dropbox link we will give you. Dropbox can handle large media files.

**DATA ANALYSIS.** Firstly, you will need to break down your raw qualitative data (i.e., your recorded interviews) into a form that can be analyzed. This is called coding. The following are suggested procedures for analysis.

*Transcribing interviews.* Generally, the first step here is transcribing the interviews in entirety. However, for this project you are not required to transcribe everything. Your report should include important quotes (quotes that demonstrate important things you found), so some amount of transcription will be done. The amount of transcribing you do is up to you. Some students may find transcribing everything makes it easier to analyze the data. Others may find they require less.

*Participant information table.* This is a suggestion for another way to break down your raw data. Make a table to organize information about your participants. This will help to compare and contrast peoples' various life circumstances and their statements. The table below is a short example. Yours could include many more columns, and likely with more detailed information (like quotes of responses to a particular question).

Interview Code (see above)	Pseudonym or Name	Age	Gender	Race	Occupation	Full time or part time, still working?	Etc.
cv200418mtiger12a	Joe	19	M	White	college student (has no job)	n/a	
cv200418mtiger12b	Jill	61	F	Black	College professor	Full, still working	
cv200419mtiger12c	Josh	30	M	White	Grocery store cashier	Part time, still working	
cv200419mtiger12d	Billy Bob	50	M	White/Latino	Doctor	Full, still working	
cv200420mtiger12e	Suzy Mac	40	F	Black	Tech startup Co.	Full, laid off after outbreak.	

Important: After your data has been broken down into a manageable form, you will begin to categorize it. Categorization refers to grouping your coded data points. Categories come together to form “themes”. Themes are higher-level categories; a grouping of lower-level categories. These themes may follow along the lines of the interview protocol, and/or you may develop your own themes.

*Themes & categories table.* Below is a simple example of the sort of table you could make to help you organize your codes, categories, and themes. Yours would include more themes and categories. (note: this is a made-up example).

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Major categories</b>	<b>Minor categories</b>
Business vs. public health	Essential jobs	R works an “essential” job but believes it’s not essential.
		R works an “essential” job and believes it is essential.
		Lack of masks/prevention at an essential job.
	Finding work amid the outbreak	R laid off after outbreak
		R was having trouble finding a job before the outbreak

Remember: the exact procedures you use to analyze your data is up to you. Qualitative research often involves making this sort of judgement.

## THE FINAL REPORT.

Grading Rubric	
20%	Interviews (5 interviews that follow the guidelines) + any other data you collect. Appendix (details below).
10%	Introduction (introduce and outline your paper)
10%	Methodology (describe your sample, data collection, methods of analysis & process of developing themes)
30%	Results (analysis of interviews & other data)
20%	Discussion (An argument or interpretation that is informed by your results)
10%	Conclusion (suggest how your findings relate to the wider society, expand on your ideas, limitations of the study, future work)
	Potential extra credit for going above and beyond our expectations!

\*\*for additional help see the example photo project reports on the class website. They can help you understand how to write a qualitative paper.

*If you need help with any aspect of conducting interviews, analyzing them, and writing the report, be sure to ask us. That's what we're here for, and that's the whole point of the project!*

## APPENDIX

Include an appendix at the end of your COVID-19 report. This will allow readers to get a picture of what was said in each of your interviews. This is worth points in the "Interviews" section of the grading rubric.

Instructions: For each interview, write 1 page that chronologically details the content of the interview. Use bullet points and provide timestamps. Write about the major points of discussion and note points where you found your themes. Include any quotes given in your report. Include the permissions given on the informed content script at the beginning of your appendix. There is a simplified example given on the following page.

Interview cv200420mtiger12e: Suzy Mac

Consent script permissions:

- Permission to record? [yes]
- Permission to use video still? [yes]
- Permission to interview for class project? [yes]
- Permission for Dr. Weil to use interview? [yes]
- Permission for Dr. Weil to contact in future? [yes]
  - If yes, interviewee's email and/or phone: SuzyMacEmail@email.com
- Okay to identify by name? [yes]
  - If yes, recorded name: Suzy Mac

Interview outline:

02:30

- Reading informed content script

08:00

- R describes their family life in detail.
  - Suzy: "Although the virus is frightening, it has brought my family closer together."
- Family life is a major theme.

15:00

- R does not work. She stays home with the kids. R talks more about family life.

17:00

- R describes contact with extended family members and church members.

20:00

- R describes the community assistance their church is providing and her role in it.
- Community assistance is a major theme.

*(your appendix pages should have more detail)*