QUALITATIVE METHODS
IN PUBLIC HEALTH
Dedicated to Andy Pasternack—our Jossey-Bass editor whose vision and encouragement inspired the first edition of this book.
Chapter 3: **Designing the Study** 45

Background and Rationale 47
Developing Study Objectives 53
Using Documentary Sources 54
Data From Human Subjects 55
Data Collection Methods 61
Collecting Data 71
Analyzing the Data 72
Disseminating Results 74
Research Ethics: Decisions for the Protection of Study Participants 74
Other Considerations: Budget and Time 78
Summary 79
Key Terms 79
Recommended Readings 81
Review Questions 81
References 81

Chapter 4: **Collecting Qualitative Data** 85

Observation 86
Interviews and Focus Groups 98
Structured Data Collection Techniques 127
Summary 134
Key Terms 135
Review Questions 137
Recommended Readings 137
References 138
Chapter 5: **Logistics in the Field**  
Introduction to the Community: Building Rapport  
Involving Policymakers and Change Agents  
Developing the Field Team  
Training  
Field Materials  
Pilot Testing  
Field Logistics  
Supervision and Monitoring  
Generating Data Files  
Transcription and Translation  
Data Management and Storage  
Timelines and Budgets  
Summary  
Key Terms  
Review Questions  
Recommended Readings  
References

Chapter 6: **Qualitative Data Analysis**  
Basic Steps in Qualitative Data Analysis  
Step 1. Reading: Developing an Intimate Relationship with the Data  
Step 2. Coding: Identifying the Emerging Themes  
Computer Software  
Step 3. Displaying Data: Distinguishing Nuances of a Topic  
Developing Hypotheses, Questioning, and Verifying  
Step 4. Data Reduction: Getting the Big Picture  
Step 5. Interpretation  
Establishing Trustworthiness  
Summary  
Key Terms
Appendix 6: Sample Budget Categories for Planning Qualitative Data Collection 373
Appendix 7: Coding Summary Report 377
Appendix 8: Example of Data Analysis Memo 383
Appendix 9: Making Study Findings Accessible to Other Researchers 387
Appendix 10: Dissemination Materials for Community Stakeholders 395
Appendix 11: Sample Briefs to Share Qualitative Study Findings with Policy Audiences 405
Appendix 12: Sample Dissemination Strategy for Advocacy 413
Appendix 13: Where to Publish 417
Appendix 14: Who Is an Author? 431

Index 433
Figures

Figure 7.1 Strategic Communications Plan 227
Figure 7.2 Flyer Disseminating Results from the LinCS 2 Durham Study to the Community 233

Tables

Table 2.1 Three Paradigms for Public Health Research 21
Table 3.1 Common Elements of a Research Proposal 46
Table 3.2 Summary of Sampling Approaches 58
Table 3.3 Structural Differences in Qualitative Data Collection 68
Table 7.1 Community Dissemination Formats and Audiences for the LinCS 2 Durham HIV Prevention Study 242

Boxes

Box 1.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research 5
Box 2.1 Checklist for Evaluating Substantive Theory 29
Box 2.2 Social Ecological Model and the Position of Substantive Theories Along Concentric Levels of Aggregation 31
Box 3.1 Conceptual Framework: Social Drivers of Adoption of Improved Cook Stoves  52
Box 3.2 Common Ways to Mix Methodologies  62
Box 3.3 Priority-Sequence Model: Decisions for Integrating Methods  64
Box 3.4 Some Federal Requirements for Informed Consent  77
Box 4.1 Guidance for Conducting Direct Observations  88
Box 4.2 Using Participant Observation to Identify Recruitment Sites at Bars and Other Establishments for an HIV-Prevention Study With Women  92
Box 4.3 Suggestions for How to Write Field Notes From Participant Observations  93
Box 4.4 Process for Constructing a Semi-Structured Question Guide  99
Box 4.5 Types of Qualitative Research Questions  101
Box 4.6 Levels of Interview Questions in a Qualitative Study of Emergency Contraception (EC)  105
Box 4.7 Deciding How Many Focus Groups to Conduct  115
Box 4.8 Collecting Background Information From Interview and Focus Group Participants  118
Box 4.9 Characteristics of a Good Interviewer or Moderator  119
Box 4.10 Common Errors in Focus Group Moderating  120
Box 4.11 Steps to Conducting a Focus Group  123
Box 5.1 Developing a Risk Management Plan  144
Box 5.2 Technology and Qualitative Research  160
Box 5.3 Illustrative Budget Considerations  168
Box 6.1 Qualitative Data Analysis: Step by Step  176
Box 6.2 Noting Content in Transcripts: An Excerpt From an Interview With a Peer Educator and Sex Worker  177
Box 6.3 Transcript Excerpt and Emergent Codes  181
Box 6.4 Preliminary Codebook  184
Box 6.5 Application of the Code “Conflict” by Two Coders  185
Box 6.6 Qualitative Intercoder Reliability Matrix  187
Box 6.7 What to Look for in Software for Qualitative Data Analysis  191
Box 6.8 Coding Report on Conflict  198
Box 6.9 Memo on Sexual Behavior  200
Box 6.10 Data Reduction Matrix Based on Sexual Behavior Coding Report  205
Box 6.11 Using a Diagram to Organize Findings 209
Box 7.1 Ways to Foster Two-Way Communication in Research 224
Box 7.2 Checklist: Elements of an Effective Communication and Dissemination Plan 226
Box 7.3 Working With the Media 230
Box 7.4 Using Social Media to Share Research 231
Box 7.5 How to Make Study Findings Accessible 232
Box 7.6 Dissemination Factors That Promote Utilization 235
Box 7.7 Policy Dissemination Tips 244
Box 8.1 How to Organize a Standard Scientific Article or Report 261
Box 8.2 Content Checklist: What to Include in Study Write-Ups 269
Box 8.3 How to Organize and Report Findings From Mixed-Method Studies 275
Box 8.4 Does Your Study Matter? 281
Case Study 1: Prevent: Human–Animal Exposure Study  295
Case Study 2: Engaging Male Partners in Women’s Microbicide Use  299
Case Study 3: LinCS 2 Durham: Linking Communities and Scientists to Durham HIV Prevention  302
Case Study 4: Sustained Acceptability of Vaginal Microbicides  307
Case Study 5: Adolescent Women and Microbicide Trials: Assessing Challenges and Opportunities to Their Participation  311
Case Study 6: A Field Assessment of Adoption of Improved Cook Stove Practices: Focus on Structural Drivers  315
Case Study 7: Exploring Gender-Based Violence Among Men Who Have Sex with Men, Male Sex Workers, and Transgender Communities  319
Case Study 8: Sociobehavioral Research and Community Planning to Develop Site-Specific Plans for PrEP Rollout  323
Case Study 9: Evaluation of Malawi Male Motivator Intervention  326
Case Study 10: Reasons for Contraceptive Nonuse in Rwanda  329
Case Study 11: Personal Involvement of Young People in HIV Prevention Campaign Messages: The Role of Message Format, Culture, and Gender  332
Case Study 12: Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision in Kenya  337
Case Study 13: Alive & Thrive  341
Case Study 14: Communicating About Microbicides with Women in Mind  344
For the past 10 years, I have taught an introductory course to master of public health (MPH) students using the first edition of *Qualitative Methods in Public Health: A Field Guide for Applied Research* (Ulin, Robinson, and Tolley, 2005). It has been an invaluable guide for students eager to understand how and why things work the way they do. The new edition continues that approach. It gives students a solid grounding in the methods of inquiry into the anatomy of a public health problem, teaching them to explore beneath the surface and discover why a problem exists as well as what the practitioner can do to address the problem.

Now in this new edition, examples have been updated and broadened to speak to greater diversity in the public health field. We see in the new material how the field is growing and how research methods have kept pace with new concepts and challenges. Qualitative research methods have found a footing in applied public health, with funding agencies now expecting to see many proposals incorporate a qualitative component in the development, implementation, or evaluation of public health interventions. The second edition takes the reader beyond evaluation of public health interventions and goes directly to research for change. Inequities in power and privilege must be addressed by actively seeking participation of neglected voices, such as women and minorities. Vivid illustrations show how research participants become potential change agents if they have been included in the conduct of the research. This is a bold new approach accompanied by research techniques for making it happen, including more emphasis on the value of mixed methods and on participatory design in which community members actually become partners in the research process.

Readers inexperienced in qualitative research will welcome the clear steps outlined in the chapter on methods, expanded in this edition. They will also
discover the utility of mobile devices such as tablets for data collection and consider greater linkages between individual, organizational, and institutional behavior as well as more ambitious goals related to health systems strengthening, health security, human rights, and health equity. The new edition also places more emphasis on qualitative analysis software and on writing for journals, a discussion that seasoned researchers as well as students will find useful.

Given greater recognition today of what qualitative research methods can do to help us understand and solve public health challenges, this book will have a wide audience. Examples in the text cut across problems encountered in public health, community medicine, and social science practice in many parts of the world. Common to all of these is the need for practical, down-to-earth advice on how to apply the methods of qualitative research to real-world settings. Numerous case studies and examples throughout the text and in the appendices provide practical guidance on many aspects of research that conventional text books often neglect, such as developing consent forms, managing budgets, designing interview guides, working with field assistants, and training data collectors.

Taken as a whole, the book represents an accumulation of experience and guidance from researchers who have been using these methods in applied public health work in global and domestic settings for many years. They share their wisdom and insight with readers, helping both to raise excitement about the possibilities these methods offer, and to reassure new researchers who may be considering qualitative methods for the first time.

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Reference

M any individuals had a hand in bringing this second edition of *Qualitative Methods in Public Health* from plan to press. There is also history to acknowledge, for a second edition cannot happen without a first edition. We reiterate our thanks to those who helped make that first edition a reality: those at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), who provided both financial support and substantive guidance on the content of the guide, especially Sarah Harbison and the late Erin T. McNeill. We also thank other individuals at FHI 360 (then Family Health International)—particularly Cynthia Woodsong, as well as colleagues at the World Health Organization, the Population Council, and organizations beyond who contributed their assistance, insight, materials, and support. FHI 360 senior management and Cynthia Geary, formerly of FHI 360, saw us through both editions of this book; to them we are further indebted.

We also acknowledge the many program and research staff members at FHI 360 who have shared research materials and stories about what has worked well and not so well when conducting qualitative research in the field. In particular, we offer special thanks to Kathleen MacQueen for contributing the content on qualitative data analysis software. We also thank the contributors of the case studies, a new feature of this second edition: Jean Baker, Aurelie Brunie, Christine Demmelmaier, Natalie Eley, Emily Evens, Cindy Geary, Nemat Hajeebhoy, Michele Lanham, Kathleen MacQueen, Dominick Shattuck, Rose Wilcher, Christina Wong, and Susan Zimicki. Many thanks also to Paul Feldblum, Michele Lanham, Marguerite Marlow, Emily Namey, the Palladium Group, Sonke Gender Justice, and Christina Wong for their contributions to the appendices. We also thank Denise Todloski at the MEASURE
Evaluation project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for designing many of the graphics in this edition.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Allison Pack, Frances McVay, Seth Zisette, and Amy Mills for assisting us with the complex task of attending to the completeness, accuracy, and organization of the references. As for reviewers both known to us (e.g., Marga Eichleay and Allison Pack for Chapter 6) and anonymous, their feedback has helped us to rethink, reword, and reorganize each of the chapters for the betterment of the entire book. And of course, without the support and excellence of Seth Schwartz, Melinda Noack, and Maria Sunny of Wiley, our collective efforts would never have made it to print.

Last, we thank our families for serving as sounding boards and comic relief throughout the process: Mark, Elise, and Kyle Healy; Don and Marjorie Ulin; Solana Mack and Zorro; and Alan Dehmer.
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QUALITATIVE METHODS IN PUBLIC HEALTH