Exercises

# Chapter 14: Collecting your data

## Exercise 1: Avoid problems with asking about past events

Arne Petersen (PhD student, Denmark) was interested in how people in the Faroe Islands responded to the sudden discovery of oil there in the 1990s. As he puts it: ‘in May 2015 I conducted nine semi-structured interviews with top management and local politicians involved in the oil industry and tried to sense the locals’ take on the oil industry. I had a set of questions which were to support my intensive interviewing, but what I really wanted to achieve was an in-depth understanding of the interviewees´ interpretation of the organization and the history of the oil industry.’

1. What problems arise in asking interviewees about past events?
2. How could Arne modify his research topic to take account of these problems?

## Exercise 2: Evaluate interview guidelines

The following research on burnout among Sri Lankan female primary school teachers includes a detailed interview guide.

1. What advantages and disadvantages do you see in this guide in the context of a qualitative research study?
2. If you plan to do interview research, what sort of guide (if any) will you use? Why?

***Interviewer guide***

1. Socio-demographic factors of the teacher:

Age

Ethnicity

Religion

Marital status

Husband’s occupation

Number of children

Family income

Place of residence: district, urban or rural

Distance of school

Method of travel to school

2. Capacity and experience of the teachers:

Highest educational qualification

Total experience in teaching

Number of years in current school

Grade of the class

3. Satisfaction:

Are you satisfied with your job?

If yes, what more than anything do you feel leads to this job satisfaction?

If no, what more than anything do you feel prevents you from being satisfied with your job?

4. Satisfaction regarding factors in the classroom:

Number of children

Space, ventilation, temperature

Teaching materials

5. Satisfaction regarding student interaction:

Students’ achievements

Students’ behaviour

6. Satisfaction regarding cooperation from colleagues and superiors:

Colleagues

Superiors

*Source: Sunil, Sri Lanka*

## Exercise 3: Explore the role of the researcher in interviewing

Make an audio recording of one interview. Then review how your contribution is presenting a version of your identity. Consider how this might affect your interviewee’s responses.

## Exercise 4: Plan for fieldwork observations

If you are planning to do some fieldwork observations, write a short research plan covering the following issues:

1. How will I obtain access to the field (and why are access negotiations important ethically and as a source of data)?
2. How can I use my fieldwork to narrow down my research topic?
3. Am I going to use one or more settings? Will one ‘case’ be enough?
4. How do I plan to record my observations?

## Exercise 5: Assess uses of interview data

Here are two examples of student research projects related to the Internet.

1. A study of consumer motivations for content creation in online social networking sites. (Lucy Miller, Macquarie University, Australia)

2. The impacts of rural Internet centres on quality of life in rural areas of Malaysia. (Marhaini Mohd Noor, University of South Queensland)

Both studies propose to gather data by interviews with users of appropriate sites. Consider:

1. What sort of data from the Internet itself might answer these students’ questions?
2. What are the gains and losses of supplementing such data by interviews, focus groups and/or onsite observations?