Apply

# Exercise 13.1

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 that 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 13.2

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

What advantages and disadvantages do you see in this guide in the context of a qualitative research study?

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 the 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 not, 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 13.3

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 13.4

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

How will I obtain access to the field (and why are access negotiations important ethically and as a source of data)?

How can I use my fieldwork to narrow down my research topic?

How do I plan to record my observations?

# Exercise 13.5

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:

What sort of data from the internet itself might answer these students’ questions?

What are the gains and losses of supplementing such data by interviews, focus groups and/or onsite observations?

## Answer to exercise 13.1

1. What problems arise in asking interviewees about past events?

*Their answers will reflect what has happened to them since that time. This means that you will not learn about what it was like in the past but how they view the past from the present time.*

2. How could Arne modify his research topic to take account of these problems?

*By treating what people told him as contemporary stories about what happened in the past*

## Answers to exercise 13.5

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

What sort of data from the internet itself might answer these students’ questions?

*Social media sites might show what topics and themes users value and, in the second study, if and how they discuss the quality of their lives*

What are the gains and losses of supplementing such data by interviews, focus groups and/or onsite observations?

*You may get a broader picture but at the cost of having too much data to analyse properly. Constructionists argue that it is commonsensical to assume that social phenomena are whole and unitary and prefer to study single datasets.*