Field Methods
Interviewing, Focus Groups and Questionnaires
A one day seminar at
Presented by
Dan Remenyi PhD

There is a large range of possible data collection techniques available to academic researcher and it is sometimes difficult to know which might be the most appropriate to use. In addition there can be a gap between knowing what techniques are available and making them work productively in the field. This seminar works at two levels. It is firstly about knowing what techniques are available and what they can do and can’t do and secondly it is about acquiring some of the practical skills needed to use them.

This seminar has been specifically designed to assist participants make the most from three of the more extensively used approaches to collecting data for doctoral research which are interviewing, focus groups and questionnaires.

This practical seminar consists of briefing, discussions and simulation exercises. Participants will be helped to decide which field method or methods are most appropriate for their research and they will have the opportunity to start developing their own protocols.

A comprehensive set of notes and useful forms will be supplied as part of the seminar documentation.

Seminar outline

• The Role of Interviewing in Academic Research
  o Defining Interviewing
  o The reality of Interviewing
  o The quality of interviews
  o The major challenges facing the interviewer

• The Different forms of Research Interviewing
  o Interviewing with a questionnaire
  o Collecting data or evidence for quantitative analysis
  o Semi-structured interviewing
  o Un-structured interviewing
  o A special art form of its own

• The stages of Interview Research
  o Planning an Interview
  o Creating your Interview Protocol
  o Thinking through the detail of the work required to find appropriate Informants and to work with them
  o Sources of error with interviewing

• What are Focus Groups?
  o When are Focus Groups appropriate as evidence collection device in qualitative or quantitative academic research?

• Instruments of evidence collection
  o Questionnaires for exploratory research versus questionnaires for hypothesis testing
  o Self administered questionnaires verses administered questionnaire

• The 5 Phases of Questionnaire Development
• Pre-questionnaire research
  o Pre-questionnaire research
  o Questionnaire design and development
  o Questionnaire field testing

• Pre-questionnaire research
  o Examining the evidence required to answer the research question
  o Listing the alternative routes to evidence acquisition
  o The selection of a measuring instrument/questionnaire

• The buy or make decision
  o Standardised questionnaires
  o Administered, self completion, telephone, Internet questionnaires

• Question categories
  o Questionnaire design and development
  o The research question and sub-questions
  o Hypotheses, Closed, Open-ended and Open response-option questions
  o Acid test, Is this question needed and if so why?
  o Clarity and ambiguity issues

• Validity Issues
  o Questionnaire field testing
  o Selecting a field testing group
  o Size of the field testing group
  o Results of the field testing
  o Critiques of questionnaires

• Setting up a field testing study
  o Evaluation the results of the Field testing group
  o Re-evaluating clarity and ambiguity
  o Amending the questionnaire

• Administrative issues
  o Ethics issues
  o Special issues related to the type of questionnaire used
  o First contact with the knowledgeable informant
  o Introduction of the research to the knowledgeable informant
  o How long will it take to complete the data collection exercise, interviews, focus groups and questionnaires?

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**Seminar Facilitator**

Dr Dan Remenyi is an external member of Faculty at Henley Business School, University of Reading and an Honorary Professor at the University of Winchester and the University of the Witwatersrand. He was for more than a decade a Visiting Professor in Information Systems Management at the School of Systems and Data Studies at Trinity College, University of Dublin. He teaches Research Methodology and Sociology of Research as well as supervising academic researchers and works extensively with research candidates and their supervisors at both doctoral and masters level. He has authored or co-authored more than 30 books and some 50 academically refereed papers. He is published in all 4 of the ‘A’ rated Journals in the United Kingdom in Information Systems Management. He holds a B Soc Sc, an MBA and a PhD.