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Introduction to Research Methods

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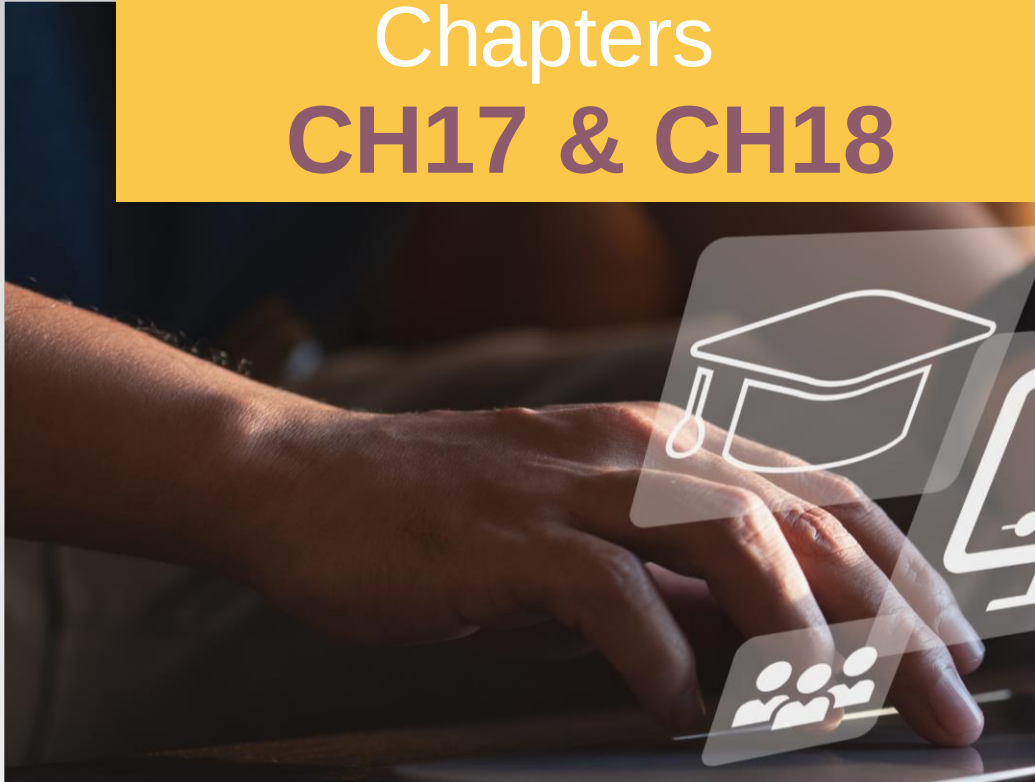
MGM 333

**Part 3 Data collection techniques
CH17 & CH18**

Lecture 10

Chapters CH17 & CH18

Part 3 Data collection techniques





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Session Outline



Part 3 Session Outline

- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ CH17 Interviews
- ☐ CH18 Questionnaires
- ☐ Summary.



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Introduction

- ☐ This section will deal with individual techniques for collecting empirical data.
- ☐ A single research design may include one or more data collection techniques.
- ☐ If you are aiming for methodological triangulation then you will be engaging in a number of data collection techniques

- ❑ Remember that data collection and data analysis often go hand in hand; think carefully about selecting and designing your data collection tools and remember that whatever is gathered needs to be analyzed

- ❑ Try to plan ahead and be aware of the nature of the data you will be harvesting and exactly what you plan to do with it.
- ❑ Regardless of which data collection techniques you decide to use in your research design there are a number of general points which apply in almost all cases

- ✓ Be very sure of what you are doing before you enter the field. Access to a field site is very often only possible because of prior relationships and connections; sometimes we have to engage in fieldwork before we have had time to do all of the detailed preparation

- ✓ If you do not have connections within the field site then you will need to negotiate access. Don't leave this until the week before you want to engage in your data collection.

- ✓ Make sure you have informed consent before you begin collecting data. This could range from the very informal to the very formal signed consent form. Be aware of what you need and use the correct channels to get it.

- ✓ Always pilot your data collection instrument before you apply it to your research subjects.
- ✓ Prepare a detailed timetable of your fieldwork for yourself and your research subjects.

- ✓ Don't be surprised if things don't go exactly as you planned. I'd be more surprised if they did. This is the real thing, not theory, and rarely will it proceed without you having to 'think on your feet'.

- ✓ Enjoy it, or at least look as if you are enjoying it. Nothing cuts off the flow of data more swiftly than a researcher who looks bored or irritated.
- ✓ Remember you will be asking a lot of people for their time and effort; without them you have no research, so treat them with the respect they deserve.

- ✓ Thank your participants in whatever way is appropriate, whether with a letter, a simple verbal 'thank you' or an acknowledgment in the final report. Don't just walk away.



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Ch17- Interviews

- ❑ The research interview can take a number of different forms, from the very structured, formal interview which is usually a researcher-administered questionnaire, to the very informal, purposeful conversation (Dexter, 1970; Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

- ☐ The only way to become a good interviewer is to practice; there is no secret formula to becoming an expert interviewer if there is such a thing.
- ☐ It is all down to knowing your topic and knowing yourself and how you react in the interview situation.

- ☐ Before you decide what form of interview will suit you best you have to decide if indeed the interview is the most appropriate technique to use.

- ☐ In order to help you make this decision you have to understand the purpose of the research interview:
- ☐ What can an interview contribute to your research?
- ☐ What can an interview do that no other technique could do, or at least not do as well?
- ☐ Is the interview 'fit for purpose'?

❑ What is the purpose of an interview?

- ✓ The purpose of an interview is to access what was in, and on, the interviewee's mind
- ✓ Interviews are usually used when we are seeking qualitative, descriptive, in-depth data that is specific to the individual and when the nature of the data is too complicated to be asked and answered easily

☐ What is the purpose of an interview?

- ✓ 'A major advantage of the interview is that it permits the respondent to move back and forth in time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future, all without leaving a comfortable armchair'

□ Types of interview

- ✓ **Structured interviews:** 'Structured interviewing refers to a situation in which an interviewer asks each respondent a series of preestablished questions with a limited set of response categories'

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□ Types of interview

- ✓ **Structured interviews:** There are two forms of structured interview.
 - In a standardized, open-ended interview all interviewees are asked the same open-ended questions but allowed to respond in any way they feel is appropriate and with any information they choose to share.



□ Types of interview

- ✓ **Structured interviews:** There are two forms of structured interview.
 - In a closed, fixed-response interview interviewees are asked the same questions and choose from a predetermined set of alternative answers. It is also possible to use a combination of the two methods.
 - Although this type of interview is very similar to the questionnaire the major benefit is the visual and oral clues you can pick up by listening to and watching your respondent..



□ Types of interview

- ✓ **Unstructured interviews:** Unstructured interviews are used to gain a holistic understanding of the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee: you are there to learn about their point of view. Very often this type of interview is used in the early stages of the research to explore salient issues for further investigation.
- ✓ Unstructured interviews are concerned with open-ended questions that allow the interviewee to tell their own story in their own words.



□ The seven stages of the interview process

1- Thematizing

‘The “why” and “what” of the investigation need to be clarified before the question of “how”’



□ The seven stages of the interview process

2- Designing

The purpose of using an interview guide is to 'ensure that each interview covers basically the same ground but gives the interviewer considerable discretion in the conduct of the interview



□ The seven stages of the interview process

3- Interviewing

Conduct the interviews based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the interpersonal relation of the interview situation (structured/unstructured)



□ The seven stages of the interview process

4- Transcribing: I always suggest that transcription be done as soon after the interview as possible. Whenever I schedule an interview I always allow the time for the interview then two hours immediately after for initial transcription. In qualitative research this means initial transcription and analysis, as you should be interpreting the data as you process it, noting themes as they emerge or making notes in the form of memos to yourself.



□ The seven stages of the interview process

5- Analyzing:

In qualitative research analysis is a constant, ongoing element of the research process; it begins during the interview, and each time you reflect on what you hear and ask a follow-up question you will have engaged in initial analysis



□ The seven stages of the interview process

6- Verifying:

Kvale (1996) uses the verification stage to refer to the extent to which the interview asked what it was intended to ask: did it answer the research question?



□ The seven stages of the interview process

7- Reporting:

In your research report your evidence from interviews will form the foundation of your emerging theory; remember that the spoken word is evidence





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Ch18- Questionnaires

- ❑ Survey data are usually obtained by means of a questionnaire, a series of pre-determined questions that can be either self-administered, administered by mail, or asked interviewers.

- ☐ When the questionnaire is to be administered by interview, it is often called an interview schedule.
- ☐ The use of questionnaires in research is based on one basic underlying assumption: that the respondent will be both willing and able to give truthful answers.

- ☐ Questionnaires are without doubt the single most popular data collection tools in any research involving human subjects.

- ❑ There are a number of reasons for using questionnaires in your research:
- ✓ you can reach a large and geographically dispersed community at relatively low cost
- ✓ you can harvest data from a larger sample than would be possible using any other technique
- ✓ anonymity can be offered as well as confidentiality

☐ Designing questionnaires

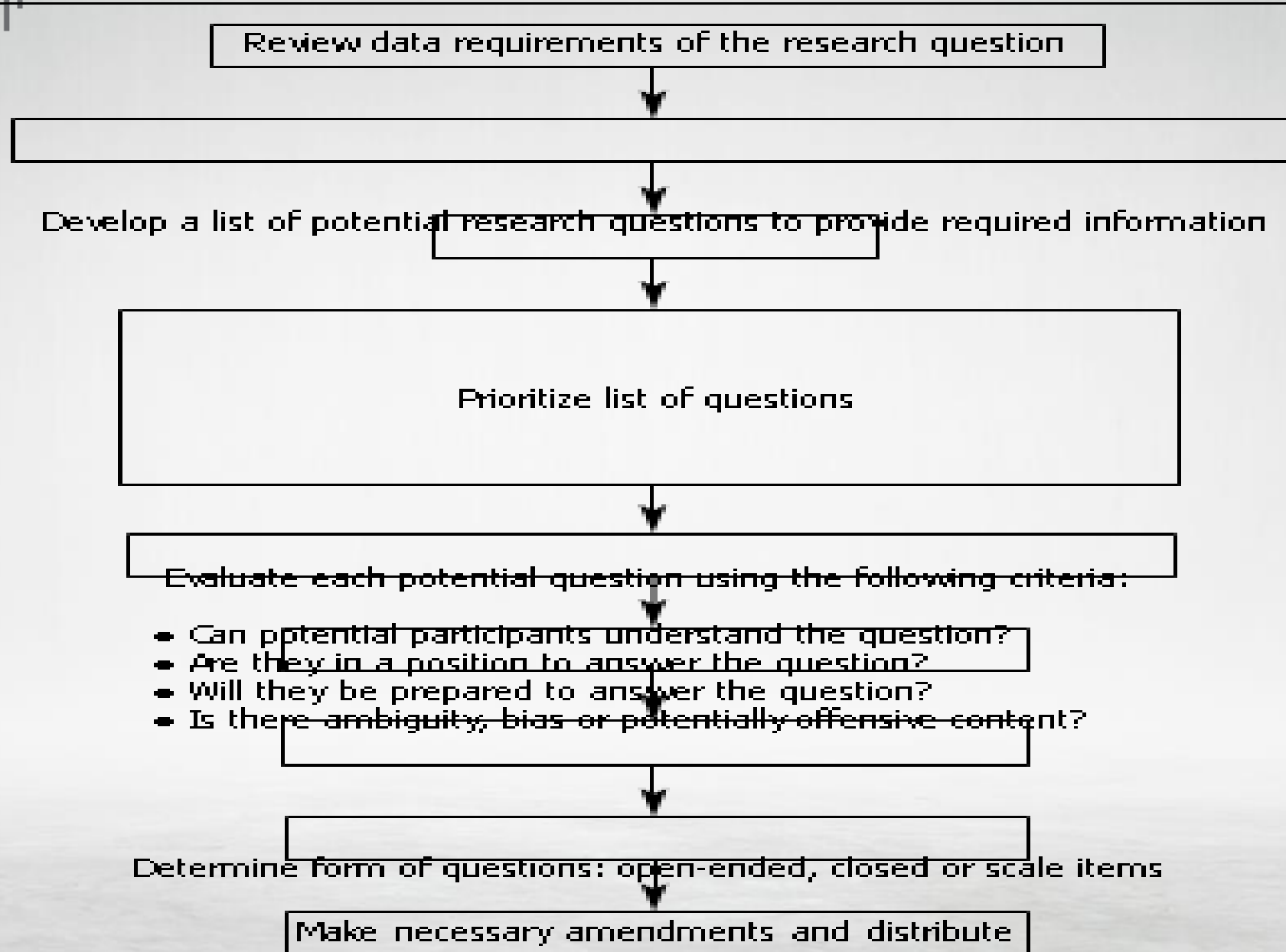
Despite being the most popular research technique, questionnaires produce a low response rate unless the researcher administers them personally.

☐ Designing questionnaires

One of the most important things to remember is that a questionnaire is required to stand alone; the researcher is rarely looking over the respondent's shoulder while he or she completes the questionnaire.

You won't be there to confirm that the respondent understands the questionnaire or to provide additional information

Figure 18.1 Steps in designing a questionnaire



☐ Scale items

Scale items are often included in questionnaires although they are a data collection technique in their own right

Example 18.1 Different types of interview question

The dichotomous question

'Have you used Information Central within the last week?'

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Can't remember

The multiple dichotomous question

'Which of the following resources do you use to produce your reports?'

- ☐ Reference texts
- ☐ The internet
- ☐ Databases
- ☐ Newspapers

Other, please state

Fixed alternative question

'Which is your designated study day?'

- ☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday

Rank order question

'Please rank the following online resources in order of preference, 1 being your favourite, 5 your least favourite.'

- ☐ BUBL info services ☐ CSA ☐ ERIC ☐ JSTOR ☐ BEI

(Please note you would only use acronyms where respondents are familiar with them and would expect to see them.)



Example 18.2 Likert scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The new self-issue system is easy to use					
I don't understand the system on-screen help facility					
I feel confident about using the self-issue system					
The self-issue system saves me time					
I would rather go to the desk to return my books					
There should be a member of staff close to the self-issue machines to help					
I am confident that my books are off my library card when I use the self-issue system					



Example 18.3 Thurstone scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Please state whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by placing a tick in the appropriate box.

	Agree	Disagree
The new self-issue system is easy to use		
I don't understand the system on-screen help facility		
I feel confident about using the self-issue system		
The self-issue system saves me time		
I would rather go to the desk to return my books		
There should be a member of staff close to the self-issue machines to help		
I am confident that my books are off my library card when I use the self-issue system		

Example 18.5 Semantic differential scale

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 For each pair of adjectives please place a tick at the point between them which best reflects the extent to which you feel the adjective best describes the new **self-issue system**.
- 2 Work through the items fairly quickly without worrying or considering them too much, your first reaction is wanted.

Resist the temptation to look back over y

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
valuable								useless
helpful								unhelpful
easy								difficult
reliable								unreliable
fast								slow
flexible								rigid

Example 18.6 Open-ended questions

1 Preventing a Yes/No response:

Question: 'Do you collaborate with other webmasters/moderators? If so, in what way?'

Actual response: 'It all depends on the attitude of the moderator. Some site owners simply do not want to share information. In fact, they are actively against it. They view other sites as rivals to be denounced and discredited. They jealously guard their information and want to be the first to harvest a specimen. Other groups realize that more can be achieved by working together and sharing information.'

Here a follow-up question was included to encourage respondents to expand on the obvious Yes/No they could provide.

2 Asking a totally open question about personal behaviour; no response suggested:

Question: 'How do you decide if information is reliable or not?'

Actual response: 'Usually there is a set pattern. The person is not going to be very outward. Most people do not want to report a Bigfoot sighting, but deep down they know what they saw and eventually it eats away at them if you will and they have to tell someone. Also, we do some field research on reports that are received near our database.'

Examples taken from: Dmytriw, D. (2003) *Information Acquisition and Exchange Within Cryptozoological Virtual Communities*, unpublished dissertation, Northumbria University. (Winner of the LIRG prize for best student dissertation 2004)

☐ Forms of questionnaire

There are a number of options available for administering and distributing questionnaires; you need to think very carefully about your target group when you decide how to reach them.

☐ Forms of questionnaire

Here is a checklist of the questions you need to ask before deciding on the format of your questionnaire:

- What form of questionnaire would best suit your subjects?
- What are your own capabilities?
- What resources do you have?
- How much time do you have?
- Is your sample group geographically dispersed?

□ Forms of questionnaire

❖ Paper-based postal questionnaires

The most common form of questionnaire is the paper-based, printed instrument. The most typical forms of distribution are by post, handing them to individuals at group events or leaving them in a prominent position where people are encouraged to complete and return them to the distribution point.

□ Forms of questionnaire

❖ Electronic questionnaires

The term 'electronic questionnaires' is generally used to cover both online questionnaires and questionnaires contained within an e-mail message;

it does not cover questionnaires produced in a word-processing package and then sent to participants as an attachment: this is still a 'paper-based' questionnaire using a different mechanism for distribution

□ Forms of questionnaire

❖ **Researcher-administered questionnaires**

Researcher-administered questionnaires usually generate the highest response rate of any questionnaires, because you approach your subject and you complete the questionnaire by asking the questions and filling in the document according to what they tell you.

The most obvious example of this is the market researcher working in the street –



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Summary

- Interviewing is a well established and well used technique for data collection.
- The interview can take any form, from the highly structured researcher-administered questionnaire to the highly open purposeful conversation.

- Choice of type depends on issues such as the researcher's experience, the nature of the research topic and questions, access to research participants and the time available for data collection.
- You need to think very carefully about your choices before you design and engage in the interview process.

- Questionnaire design involves a great deal of common sense and personal experience.
- It is only by attempting to harvest data on specific research questions that you will come to understand the intricacies of designing effective questionnaires..

- Always remain aware of the purpose of the investigation and make sure each question you ask relates to it specifically

- Remember that a questionnaire depends entirely on the ability and willingness of respondents to answer the questions you are asking.
- Make sure you ask them questions they can answer in a format they can understand.

- It is also a very good idea to be aware of how you intend to analyze the data and how it will be used to inform the investigation.
- Be sure to pilot your instrument with a reasonable number of test subjects before you release it to your sample population.



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Thank You

