

COMP 7036

Applied Research Methods in Software Development

Qualitative Research

Class Exercises

Discuss the questions below in your group, and present your conclusions to the class.

Exercise #1

Dr. D is conducting an interview with Amber, who works as a cocktail waitress. Here is an excerpt:

Dr. D: What shift do you typically work?

Amber: Night. I come in around 7:00 p.m. and work until 2:00 a.m.

Dr. D: Cocktail waitressing has a bad reputation. How bad is it to work here?

Amber: Not so bad. Most of our customers are pretty nice guys. They're regulars and they don't drink too much and get out of control. In fact, if one customer is giving me a hard time, another often steps in and helps out.

Dr. D: As the evening progresses, the men give you more and more problems, don't they? What do you do about that?

Amber: I ignore it as long as I can. I get the manager to step in if they don't straighten up.

Do you notice any problems with the interviewing technique of Dr. D? Describe the problems you see in the excerpts and then explain what Dr. D should do differently.

Exercise #2

Emily is an undergraduate college student who is interested in conducting an ethnographic study of social interactions among high school girls.

Should her role be that of a participant observer or should her role be that of an "outsider"? Explain your answer, paying attention to the benefits and pitfalls of each method.

Exercise #3

In a qualitative study, the interpretation of data is influenced by the researcher's biases and values to some extent, reflecting the notion of researcher as instrument.

What strategies can the researcher use to minimize bias in the final analysis of data?