

SECTION 3

ROSA: Oh, there you are, good. Sorry I'm a bit late – there was a long queue. So, have you worked out how to deal with this assignment then?

MICK: Not yet, we've only been here a couple of minutes ourselves.

ROSA: Can you just remind me what the task is exactly?

Tapescripts

- PETE: Well, there are two, no, three, parts to it: first, we've got to write an essay about ways of collecting data. Then . . .
- ROSA: What's the title of the essay exactly?
- MICK: I've got it here: 'Assess the two main methods of collecting data in social science research'. Q21
- ROSA: And how much do we need to write?
- MICK: Fifteen hundred words. That's for the essay. Then, for the second part of the assignment, we have to choose one method of data collection, and 'carry out a small-scale study, making appropriate use of the method chosen to gather data from at least five subjects'. Q22
- ROSA: And then we have to write a report on the study?
- PETE: That's right, of three to four thousand words. Q23
- ROSA: Did you get as far as discussing which form of data collection we should go for – questionnaire or interview, isn't it?
- MICK: Yeah, I think we should use a questionnaire. It'll be so much less time-consuming than organising interviews, I reckon. Once we've agreed on the wording of it, we only have to send it out and wait for the responses.
- ROSA: Yes, I think it probably would be quicker. But what did that article he gave us last week say about the quality of data from questionnaires?
- MICK: I'm pretty sure it recommended questionnaires as a source of 'highly reliable data'. As long as you design the questionnaire properly in the first place, the data will be fine.
- ROSA: No, I'm sure it talked about drawbacks as well, didn't it? Something about the response rate and the problems you get if it's too low. Q24
- MICK: Yeah, but we only need data from five subjects anyway.
- ROSA: I suppose so. Another drawback I remember it mentioned was that questionnaire data tends not to reveal anything unexpected, because it is limited to the questions fixed in advance by the researcher. Q25
- MICK: Come on, Rosa. This is only a practice. It's not meant to be real research, is it?
- ROSA: Well, I'm not sure about that.
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- ROSA: Maybe I'd better go through the article again, just to be sure. Can you remember what it was called?
- MICK: 'Sample Surveys in Social Science Research', I think. By Mehta. Q26
- ROSA: M-E-H-T-A ?
- MICK: Yeah. And he also recommended a more recent book, called 'Survey Research', by Bell, I think. It's in that series published by London University. Q27
- PETE: And if we tried to use interviews instead, I saw a book in the departmental library that'll be helpful: it's called 'Interviews that work', by Wilson, published in Oxford in nineteen eighty-eight. Q28
- ROSA: Right. I've got a tutorial now. Can we meet up again later this week? What about Friday morning? Q29
- PETE: Suits me. Eleven o'clock?
- ROSA: Fine.
- MICK: Before Friday, I think we should all look through the reading list. Q30