

Name of Method	Focused (Semi-structured) Interviews
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Brief Outline of Method

This technique is used to collect **qualitative** data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. The **focus** of the interview is decided by the researcher and there may be areas the researcher is interested in exploring.

The objective is to **understand** the respondent's point of view rather than make generalisations about behaviour. It uses **open-ended questions**, some suggested by the researcher ("Tell me about...") and some arise naturally during the interview ("You said a moment ago...can you tell me more?").

The researcher tries to build a **rapport** with the respondent and the interview is like a conversation. Questions are asked when the interviewer feels it is appropriate to ask them. They may be prepared questions or questions that occur to the researcher during the interview. The wording of questions will not necessarily be the same for all respondents.

Strengths / Uses of Method	Weaknesses / Limitations of Method
<p>1. Positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee. Very simple, efficient and practical way of getting data about things that can't be easily observed (feelings and emotions, for example).</p> <p>2. High Validity. People are able to talk about something in detail and depth. The meanings behind an action may be revealed as the interviewee is able to speak for themselves with little direction from interviewer.</p> <p>3. Complex questions and issues can be discussed / clarified. The interviewer can probe areas suggested by the respondent's answers, picking-up information that had either not occurred to the interviewer or of which the interviewer had no prior knowledge.</p> <p>4. Pre-Judgement: Problem of researcher pre-determining what will or will not be discussed in the interview is resolved. With few "pre-set questions" involved, the interviewer is not "pre-judging" what is and is not important information.</p> <p>5. Easy to record interview (video / audio tapes).</p>	<p>1. Depends on the skill of the interviewer (the ability to think of questions during the interview, for example) and articulatory of respondent.</p> <p>2. Interviewer may give out unconscious signals / cues that guide respondent to give answers expected by interviewer.</p> <p>3. Time Consuming / expensive</p> <p>4. Not very reliable - difficult to exactly repeat a focused interview. Respondents may be asked different questions (non-standardised). Samples tend to be small.</p> <p>5. Depth of qualitative information may be difficult to analyse (for example, deciding what is and is not relevant).</p> <p>6. Personal nature of interview may make findings difficult to generalise (respondents may effectively be answering different questions).</p> <p>8. Validity:</p> <p>a. The researcher has no real way of knowing if the respondent is lying.</p>

	<p>b. The respondent may not consciously lie but may have imperfect recall. If you were being asked to remember things that happened days, weeks or months ago it's likely that you would actually remember very little about what happened...</p> <p>c. An interview can sometimes be a "second chance" to do something; having been given the time to reflect on something they did, the respondent tries to make sense of their behaviour by rationalising their actions. They are not consciously lying (since they will believe what they are saying is true), but their explanation for their behaviour, with hindsight, may be very different from what they actually felt at the time.</p> <p>Criminals, for example, frequently express feelings of guilt and remorse for what they have done (which they may genuinely feel) and this may be taken as evidence they accept the values of the society in which they live. On the other hand, this remorse may simply be an expression of what the respondent believes the researcher wants to hear...</p>
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