

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

<p>Brief Outline of Method</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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?").</p> <p>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.</p>

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>
--	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

How **reliable** is this method? [Circle one option]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Highly Neither Reliable Highly
Reliable nor Unreliable Unreliable

Briefly explain why you think the method is reliable / unreliable

A focused interview is difficult - if not impossible - to repeat exactly, since the questions are not pre-determined (although the researcher may have a few such questions to ask during the course of the interview) and the respondent is encouraged to talk freely in depth and detail.

If you think about this method as being like a conversation, how many conversations are ever exactly the same?

A respondent may answer the same question in a different way depending on a number of factors (how they feel, their relationship to the interviewer, etc.) that are impossible for the researcher to control.

How **valid** is this method? [Circle one option]

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Highly Neither Valid Very Low
Valid nor Invalid Validity

Briefly explain why you think the method is valid / invalid

This method provides a depth of information through the use of open-ended questions.

It allows the respondent to talk freely about issues and does not constrain their responses through the need to ask / answer predetermined questions.

If the interview is videotaped things like body language can be studied at a later date by the researcher.

