Name of Method

**Structured Interviews** 

## Brief Outline of Method

In its simplest form, a structured interview involves one person asking another person a list of predetermined questions about a carefully-selected topic.

The person asking the questions ("the interviewer") is allowed to explain things the interviewee (or "respondent" - the person responding to the questions) does not understand or finds confusing.

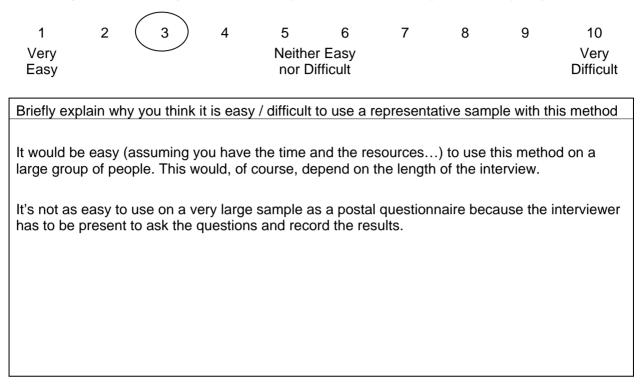
This method has the following Strengths / Uses:	This method has the following Weaknesses / Limitations:				
1. It enables the researcher to examine the level of understanding a respondent has about a particular topic - usually in slightly more depth than with a postal questionnaire.	1. Can be time consuming if sample group is very large (this is because the researcher or their representative needs to be present during the delivery of the structured interview).				
2. It can be used as a powerful form of formative assessment. That is, it can be used to explore how a respondent feels about a particular topic before using a second method (such as observation or in- depth interviewing) to gather a greater depth of	2. The quality and usefulness of the information is highly dependent upon the quality of the questions asked. The interviewer cannot add or subtract questions.				
information. Structured interviews can also be used to identify respondents whose views you may want to explore in more detail (through the use of	3. A substantial amount of pre-planning is required.				
focused interviews, for example).	4. The format of questionnaire design makes it difficult for the researcher to examine complex issues and opinions. Even where <b>open-ended</b>				
3. All respondents are asked the same questions in the same way. This makes it easy to repeat (" <b>replicate</b> ") the interview. In other words, this type of research method is easy to <b>standardise</b> .	<b>questions</b> are used, the depth of answers the respondent can provide tend to be more-limited than with almost any other method.				
4. Provides a <b>reliable</b> source of <b>quantitative</b> data.	5. There is limited scope for the respondent to answer questions in any detail or depth.				
5. The researcher is able to contact large numbers of people quickly, easily and efficiently					

Continuation of strengths / uses (if necessary)	Continuation of weaknesses / limitations: (if necessary)
<ul> <li>6. It is relatively quick and easy to create, code and interpret (especially if closed questions are used).</li> <li>7. There is a formal relationship between the researcher and the respondent with the latter knowing exactly what is required from them in the interview</li> <li>If, for example, a respondent is unable or unwilling to answer a question the researcher (because they are present at the interview) is aware of the reasons for a failure to answer all questions.</li> <li>8. The researcher does not have to worry about response rates, biased (self-selected) samples, incomplete questionnaires and the like</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>6. There is the possibility that the presence of the researcher may influence the way a respondent answers various questions, thereby biasing the responses.</li> <li>For example, an aggressive interviewer may intimidate a respondent into giving answers that don't really reflect the respondent's beliefs. Similarly, a young male researcher asking a middle aged woman how frequently she had sexual intercourse in the past month may be embarrassing for the respondent and make her unlikely to answer truthfully. This is known as the interview effect.</li> <li>7. A problem common to both postal questionnaires and structured interviews is the fact that by designing a "list of questions", a researcher has effectively decided - in advance of collecting any data - the things they consider to be important and unimportant.</li> </ul>

Sociological Re	search Skills	S				Res	earch I	Methods
How reliable is this method? [Circle one option]								
1 2 Highly Reliable	3	4	5 Neither F nor Unr		7	8	9	10 Highly Unreliable
Briefly explain why you think the method is reliable / unreliable								
This method is u However, this wi								э).
How <b>valid</b> is this	-			6	7			10
1 2 Highly Valid	3	4	5 Neither nor In		7	8	9	10 Very Low Validity
Briefly explain w	hy you think t	he meth	od is valid	/ invalid				
Validity is usually not much scope also tends to be Because the que researcher nor th that potentially in be easily explore	for the intervi restricted in to estions are pro- ne responden nportant area	ewer to a erms of t e-planne t can de	ask highly the depth ed (decideo viate signi	detailed, o of answers d in advan ficantly fro	complex s they c ce of th om the q	questions. an give. e interview) uestions as	The res neither ked. Thi	pondent the is means

## **Sociological Research Skills**

How easy is it to use a **representative** sample with this method? [Circle one option]



How easy is it to generalise your findings using this method? [Circle one option]

1	2	(3)	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Very Easy				Neithe nor Di					Very Difficult

Briefly explain why you think it is easy / difficult to generalise your findings using this method

If it's possible to quickly and easily apply this method to a large, representative, sample of people it should also be relatively easy to generalise your findings from the sample to the general / target population.