

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews are less formal than structured interviews and **do not follow an interview schedule** – that is there is no list of standardised questions. Researchers will have several topics to discuss, but will have the **freedom to ask follow-up questions**.



This allows the researcher to develop a **rapport** with the respondent, potentially leading to more informative responses.



Within feminist methodology this has been used to signpost victims to support networks

It also allows the researcher to show **empathy** towards the respondent, particularly when dealing with **socially sensitive** topics such as being the victim of crime

However, critics have suggested that this leads to a **loss of objectivity** on the researcher's part. They also suggest that unstructured interviews can be **time-consuming** and **go off-topic**.



Interpretivists argue that the use of unstructured interviews enable the researcher to gain an insight into the **meaning and motivations** behind an individual's actions – something that gives the research **validity**

Although this makes the results and findings unique, unstructured interviews are difficult to replicate and therefore lack reliability.

Examples:
Oakley 'The Conventional Family'

Carlen –
'Women, poverty and Crime'

Often used in group setting in education – e.g. Willis, Archer

Sociological Research Methods