

INFORMAL/UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS- a small scale research technique favoured by INTERPRETIVISTS/ANTI-POSITIVISTS that looks for insight rather than gathering factual information.		
How it is carried out	Theoretical advantages - Interpretivists	Theoretical disadvantages - positivist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No pre-set questions - general areas to talk about which loosely direct the interview. • Like a conversation - free flowing and informal. • Recorded (usually by tape or video). • Flexibility is very important - allows the respondent to decide what is important and lead the interview. • Example study - Dobash & Dobash - domestic violence. 	<p>Interpretivists favour this method because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapport is built up because the respondent has trust and confidence in the interviewer. This makes it likely that the validity of the findings will be high and is a good technique for sensitive areas of sociology. e.g. domestic violence, eating disorders. Dobash & Dobash built up rapport as they spent a great deal of time in the refuges and became 'permanent fixtures' in the women's lives. • Verstehen it becomes possible to see things through the eyes of the interviewees and get true empathy. Validity is therefore increased. Dobash and Dobash spent time with the women and asked the women about their whole lives not just about the incidents of domestic violence. • Findings are qualitative and in depth. Dobash & Dobash interviews were detailed and lasted for up to 12 hours. Motives, emotions, reasons, meanings and feelings are explored. It is possible to get close to people's actual experiences. In this way validity is increased. • No premature closure - the interviewer does not pre-define the findings, and therefore validity is increased. <p><i>A2 extra point</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge potential for flexibility. For example the interviewer can follow up interesting avenues of discussion. The interviewer can probe further and get respondents to develop their points and so on. 	<p>Positivists do not favour this technique because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample size tends to be small due to the detailed and time consuming nature of this technique. Dobash & Dobash only carried out 109 interviews. This lowers reliability and makes it difficult to generalise, quantify or get a representative sample. • It is not a systematic method. With no preset questions and relying on the skills of the interviewer the results are difficult to verify and reliability is inevitably lowered. • Can lack objectivity. The interviewer's presence and the way questions are asked may affect results. The interviewer may even offer their own opinions which may bias the results. The interviewer may be too close to the subject and alter their findings without realising. Bias may also occur during the detailed analysis process. The feminist stance of Dobash & Dobash may have affected the objectivity of their findings. Reliability is lowered because of the above bias.
<p>Ethical concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consequences for the interviewees needs consideration. The interviewer must ensure that when the research is published it does not harm the group. It must not have negative consequences for them. • Exploitation of the interviewee must be avoided. The researcher must make sure that they do not pry too much and must not create anxiety or distress in the participants. This is particularly important when investigating sensitive areas. 		