

Examine the advantages of unstructured interviews in sociological research

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



In this essay I will be examining the advantages of unstructured interviews; unstructured interviews gain qualitative data, which is data which cannot be analysed for patterns or trends. One advantage of unstructured interviews is it produces valid data; valid data is data that is true to life, opinionated and cannot be analysed. This is an advantage because qualitative data is received, anti-positivists prefer qualitative data as it gives motives behind actions. However, valid data is not reliable as if you repeat the interview; you will not get the same results as human behaviour is unpredictable.

Another advantage of unstructured interviews is it gives the researcher access to sensitive topics, for example domestic abuse. It's an advantage because anti-positivists get access to emotions the participant is feeling and can build a rapport with them and they will therefore be more open. An example of this is Dobash and Dobash's study, in which they interviewed a woman about her experience with domestic violence. However, the participant talking about their sensitive information can cause emotional distress to either the participant or the researcher especially in the case of domestic violence.

A third advantage is the fact that unstructured interviews the participant can be interviewed with their friends or family, which is known as a group interaction. This is an advantage because the participant will be more relaxed and at ease when answering the researchers questions. However, group interactions can lead to demand characteristics in which the participant behaves unnaturally and may even lie during the interview, therefore reducing the validity of the interview.

A final advantage is that unstructured interviews can be flexible, in which the researcher has no set questions and as the interview progresses more questions are answered. This is an advantage because the interview will be unique and provides new data which hasn't been reshaped by a hypothesis. However, it's unreliable as you can't repeat the whole interview word for word when there are no set questions. To conclude, four advantages of unstructured interviews are they're flexible, the participant can be interviewed with friends or family members, it allows access to sensitive topics and it produces valid data.