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| **METHOD - DEFINITION** | | **ADVANTAGES/**  **SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS – SUMMARY TABLE**  **USES** | **DISADVANTAGES/**  **LIMITATIONS** | **EXAMPLES**  **EDUCATION** | **MiC**  **ISSUES** |
| **Social Surveys / Self Report** | **INTERVIEWS** | Differ from questionnaires in that they involve some form of social interaction, depending on type:ethnic variation. | | | |
| **STRUCTURED**  Similar to Qaire but Qs (usually closed/pre-coded filled in by interviewer | * Preferred by positivists * Easy to train interviewers * Fairly quick & cheap – larger scale. * Higher response rate * Opportunity for clarification * Can include responses from those who can’t read and write. * Comparable/quantifiable data * Formal enough to reduce interviewer bias / effects * Easy to replicate | * More expensive / time-consuming than Qaires * Interviewer bias – effects of age, gender, personality * Demand characteristics – social desirability, screw you effect. * Closed Qs - limited opportunities for original responses – less valid. * Interpretivist/feminist critique – meanings imposed rather than understanding subjective experience in a broader social context. | * **Beron et al** (2001) US Study – vocabulary tests for 3-14 yrs | * Age group – verbal/linguistic skill (tho usually better verbally than literacy), attention spa, focus ,suggestibility – importance of body language – kids more alert to non-verbal cues and give time to think – can consider alternatives e.g. using pictures * Interviewers need special training and skills. * School ’grapevine’ – increase demand characteristics & undermine validity * Dangers of formality – associated with teachers & authority – reduce validity. * Schools are hierarchical – influences interaction and validity * Gatekeepers – permission from e.g. head LEA, parents etc – may increase or decrease access, depending on topic |
| **SEMI-STRUCTURED** | * Similar to structured approach * More opportunities to probe, clarify, develop etc * More depth, detail. | * Loss of standardisation * Loss of comparability | * **Becker** (1977) \_Teacher perceptions of the ‘Ideal Pupil * **Mirza** (1992) with black girls * **Sue Sharpe** (1976 & 1990) |
| **UN-STRUCTURED**  Informal open-ended. May have a genera topic-driven interview schedule but more like a conversation. | * Preferred by interpretivists * Rapport – more in-depth info esp on sensitive topics. * Interviewer free to take direction from interviewee. * More flexible * Fresh insights/unfamiliar topics * More opportunities to clarify | * Time-consuming/expensive * More training & skills * Smaller scale – less representative * Difficult to replicate * Difficult to quantify, analyse, compare, establish causal relationships * More interviewer bias / effects * Demand characteristics – social desirability. | * **Gerwitz et al** (1995) – Parental interviews on school transfer * **Labov** – Black kids informal cpd formal setting * **Lacey** (1970) Informal conversations with staff & pupils |
| **GROUP**  Typically 8-10. Asked Qs in turn or focus group – guided discussions. | * More like real world – most opinions manifested in gp contexts * Richer data if more informal. * Restores power imbalance between interviewees and interviewer. * Ideas stimulated by interaction * Opportunities to observe group dynamics. | * Group may be dominated by a few eg most confident/articulate. * Difficult to keep focus * Effects of peer group pressure affect validity. * Harder to analyse data | * **Willis** (1976)– Anti-school subculture |