

# RESEARCH METHOD FLASH CARDS



## Open Questions

A open question questionnaire is a document that is handed to a participant to complete alone and the questions allow them to explain their responses.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Venkatesh 2011:** Gang Leader for a day - Started with open questionnaire but switched to observation when it was clear the gang members wouldn't answer the questions.

## Closed Questions

A closed question questionnaire is a document that is handed to a participant to complete alone and the questions provide a selection of responses to choose from or a Likert scale.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Crime Survey of England and Wales** – Annual survey asking about experiences of crime in the last 12 months.

### STRENGTHS

- Cheap
- Quick
- Easy
- Anonymous
- Confidential
- Detailed in depth data
- Reliable
- Access Large Samples

### LIMITATIONS

- Low response rates
- Misunderstanding of the question
- Difficult to analyse
- The respondent may not be the intended participant.
- Right Answerism

### STRENGTHS

- Cheap
- Quick
- Easy
- Anonymous
- Confidential
- Reliable
- Access Large Samples
- Easy to analyse

### LIMITATIONS

- Low response rates
- Misunderstanding of the question
- Lacks validity (depth)
- The respondent may not be the intended participant.
- Right Answerism

## Web Based

These are questionnaires that are sent out via the internet possibly using services such as Google Forms or Survey Monkey. Can be a mixture of open and closed questions.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

#### STRENGTHS

- Cheap
- Quick
- Easy
- Anonymous
- Confidential
- Reliable
- Access Large Samples
- Easy to analyse

#### LIMITATIONS

- Low response rates due to email going to junk mail.
- Misunderstanding of the question.

## Postal

These are questionnaires that are sent out via the Postal Service.  
Can be a mixture of open and closed questions.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

#### STRENGTHS

- Easy
- Anonymous
- Confidential
- Reliable
- Access Large Samples

#### LIMITATIONS

- Low response rates due to being considered to junk mail.
- Expensive for postage & freepost returns.
- Time consuming waiting for the postal service.
- Misunderstanding of the question.

## Covert

Where the researcher goes under cover and the people being observed are not aware of it.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Laud Humphreys 1970/1975** – The Tearoom Trade
- **Hobbs 1988** – Police Attitudes
- **"Patrick" 1973** – A Glasgow gang observed

### STRENGTHS

- Lack of researcher effect.
- Rich detailed data
- High validity as doesn't disturb day to day life of participants
- Access to secret/unconscious behaviour of the group

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Breach of Privacy
- Lack of informed consent
- Subjective
- Time Consuming
- Hard to gain access
- Small Sample

## Overt

Where the researcher makes the participants aware that they are being observed.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Venkatesh 2011** - Gang Leader for a day
- **Hargreaves 1967** – Setting and Streaming
- **Eileen Barker 1984** – The Moonies

### STRENGTHS

- Rich detailed data
- High validity as doesn't disturb day to day life of participants
- Informed consent can be gained
- Researcher doesn't have to fit in with the group.
- Objectivity

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effects - Hawthorne Effect
- Time Consuming
- Small Sample
- Not generalizable

## Participant

Where the researcher plays an active role in the group they are researching. They become part of the group.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Bill Whyte 1955** - Street Corner Society
- **Paul Willis 1977** - Learning to Labour
- **Simon Holdaway 1983** Inside the British Police

### STRENGTHS

- Rich detailed data
- High validity as the researcher experiences the life of the group.
- Verstehen achieved
- Builds rapport and trust
- Flexibility

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effects – just by being present the researcher can change the dynamic of the group.
- Time Consuming
- Small Sample
- Not generalizable

## Non Participant

When the researcher simply watches the group without taking an active part in the activities of the group.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Atkinson 1978** – Coroners Inquests into Suicide
- **Smith and Grey 1983** – London Metropolitan police
- **Gilborn 1990** – Race Ethnicity and Education

### STRENGTHS

- Rich detailed data
- High validity as the researcher experiences the life of the group.
- Verstehen achieved
- Builds rapport and trust
- Flexibility

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effects – just by being present the researcher can change the dynamic of the group.
- Time Consuming
- Small Sample
- Not generalizable

## Structured

A conversation between two people where the questions have been set in advance and are not deviated from.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Halsey, Heath and Ridge 1980:** Origins & Destinations
- **Willmott and Young 1962** – Families in the East End
- **Peter Townsend 1979** – Poverty & Social Exclusion

### STRENGTHS

- Researcher is present to explain the questions.
- Reliable
- High response rate
- Builds a rapport so can help with sensitive topics.

### LIMITATIONS

- Inflexibility
- Researcher Effect (Demand Characteristics & social Desirability)
- Time Consuming
- Expensive to train interviewers
- Not Anonymous

## Semi Structured

A conversation between two people where the questions have been set in advance but the researcher is able to deviate from them in response to the participants answers.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Dobash and Dobash 1979** – Violence against wives.
- **Anne Oakley 1974** – The sociology of Housework
- **Archer, Halsall & Hollingworth 2007** - Class, gender, (hetero) sexuality, and schooling

### STRENGTHS

- Researcher is present to explain the questions.
- Flexibility
- Increased depth of data
- Verstehen

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effect (Demand Characteristics & social Desirability)
- Time Consuming
- Expensive to train interviewers
- Not Anonymous

## Unstructured

A conversation between two people where the initial question maybe set but all subsequent questions are based on the responses from the participant.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Pat Carlen 1988** – Class and Gender Deals
- **Fiona Devine 1992** - How close-knit are kinship ties?
- **Howard Becker 1971** – Teacher Labelling

### STRENGTHS

- Researcher is present to explain the questions.
- Flexibility
- Increased depth of data
- Verstehen

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effect (Demand Characteristics & social Desirability)
- Time Consuming
- Expensive to train interviewers
- Not Anonymous

## Group

Where the researcher interviews several people in one sitting.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Paul Willis 1977** – Learning to Labour

### STRENGTHS

- Researcher is present to explain the questions.
- Good to use when researching children.
- Increased depth of data
- Participants can bounce off each other
- Verstehen

### LIMITATIONS

- Lacks reliability
- Researcher Effect (Demand Characteristics & social Desirability)
- Peer Group Pressures
- Time Consuming
- Expensive to train interviewers
- Not Anonymous

## Laboratory

When the research takes place in an artificial setting and the variables are manipulated by the researcher

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Milgram 1963** – Study of Obedience
- **Harvey & Slatin 1976** – Teacher Expectations & Social Class
- **Charkin 1975** – Teacher Labelling

### STRENGTHS

- High Reliability
- Can establish cause and effect
- Informed Consent is gained.
- Easy to analyse the data

### LIMITATIONS

- Artificial environment
- Small Sample size
- Impractical for some situations
- Not all variables can be controlled

## Field

When the research takes place in a natural setting but the researcher is manipulating the variables.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

- **Rosenthal and Jacobson 1966** – Pygmalion in the classroom
- **Bandura 1962** – Social Learning through imitation.

### STRENGTHS

- External Validity compared to Lab Experiments.
- Large Scale
- Reliability
- Can establish cause and effect.

### LIMITATIONS

- Impractical for some situations
- Not all variables can be controlled
- Experimental Effect
- Access Problems
- Can have deception and Harm



## Official

Quantitative data that comes from governments and their agencies.

### EXAMPLES

- Official Crime Rate
- Census
- Exam Results
- Demographic Data

### STRENGTHS

- Reliability
- Easy to Access
- Cheap
- Up to date data
- Can be used comparatively.
- Allows researchers to see correlations.

## Unofficial

Statistics that are produced by companies, charities and other organisations.

### EXAMPLE STUDIES

### LIMITATIONS

- Definitions may differ between sociologists and those compiling the data.
- Tell us very little about the "why" behind the data.
- Socially constructed.

## Personal

Personal documents consist of qualitative data that reflect an individuals or groups experiences, feelings attitudes and motives.

### EXAMPLES

- Diaries
- Letters
- Memoirs
- Emails and Blogs

### STRENGTHS

- High validity (detailed)
- Ethnographic
- Cheap
- Easy to access

### LIMITATIONS

- Subjective
- Not representative
- Unreliable
- Lack validity due to being one persons experience.

## Historical / Public

When the research takes place in a natural setting but the researcher is manipulating the variables.

### EXAMPLES

- Major government reports
- Media Reports
- Publicity materials
- Internet content
- Documents which report on specific activities (Hansard and Ofsted reports)

### STRENGTHS

- Usually the product of standardised reliable research methods.
- Try to be objective
- Easy to access & cheap.
- Quick
- Avoids potential bias.

### LIMITATIONS

- Authenticity may be suspect.
- Difficult to verify contents
- Official documents might be censored.
- Documents might not exist for all areas of research.
- Subjective interpretations.
- No guarantee of reliability or representativeness.