

## **Chapter 3 Theories and Methods**

### **Topic 2 Qualitative Research Methods**

#### **Answers to QuickCheck Questions on page 185**

1. Every interview is unique – they are not standardised; they are impossible to replicate; interviewers may differ in personal characteristics and the way they conduct the interview.
2. The researcher can learn what questions and lines of enquiry are useful as they go along.
3. A relationship with trust and understanding. It means the interviewees are likely to reveal more of their feelings because they like and trust the interviewer.
4. Advantages: participants may 'feed off' each other's comments; they may feel more comfortable; group interviews may generate ideas to investigate. Disadvantages: some individuals may dominate and others say little or nothing; participants may not say what they really think because of peer group pressure; data is difficult to analyse.
5. This is a pre-determined list of the types of behaviour the sociologist is interested in. Each time the behaviour occurs, the observer records it on the schedule.
6. Suggest two reasons why participant observation might not produce (a) representative data and (b) reliable data.
  - (a) The group studied is usually very small. The 'sample' is often selected haphazardly, for example through a chance encounter with someone who turns out to be a key informant. This means that the group studied may be unrepresentative of the wider population
  - (b) it is not a standardised, scientific measuring instrument. Instead, the success of the research depends heavily on the personal skills and characteristics of the lone researcher. This means it is impossible for any other investigator to check the original study by replicating it, so we cannot be as confident its findings are true. The fact that participant observation usually produces qualitative data also makes comparisons with other studies difficult.
7. It may involve deception of participants; there is little possibility of obtaining informed consent; the researcher may become involved in or know about illegal or immoral activities; it may be dangerous; the researcher may leave the group without an explanation; the researcher may publish information about the group without their knowledge.
8. It allows the researcher to see things through the eyes of the group; it focuses on small-scale interaction; it focuses on the meanings behind actions.
9. See any of the advantages listed in Box 3.6, page 179

10. Because the sociologist is not involved in their initial collection.

11. A method used to investigate the way material is presented by the media, involving the classification of material into different categories. All could be used by sociologists, but the Census is a set of statistics, not a written document. All the others are documents.

12. Whether what the document says is believable.

© 2016 Napier Press. All rights reserved