**Godalming College**

Booklet Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

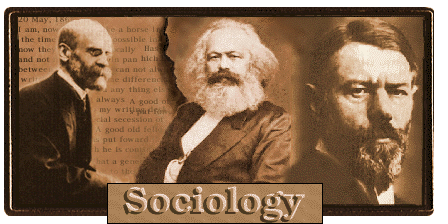
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**Sociology Department**

**Methods and Theory**

1. [](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/read-our-blog/online-expansion-plans-do-your-market-research.html&ei=-aV2Vbi9MuLd7QanvoDYBA&bvm=bv.95039771,d.ZGU&psig=AFQjCNHNcSNvyc_iZ321Z_d782N1lZum3A&ust=1433925483162071)



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| Name: | Set: | Group: |

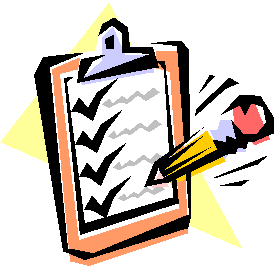
**Symbols**



Requires you to complete an activity, such as a quiz on Godalming Online



Requires you to make notes or complete a written task



Refers to an assessment

**Theory and Methods**

**Research methods** are all about what sociologists do. Many sociological theories are underpinned by evidence. Evidence has to be collected from the social world around us and this requires empirical research to be done. ‘Empirical’ simply means ‘based on evidence from the real world’. The process of carrying out research and collecting evidence distinguishes sociologists from those who make claims about society based on common-sense opinions, personal experiences or prejudices.

You will find that there is a strengthened emphasis on the terminology and uses of sampling techniques as applied to evaluating research studies, but also a strong emphasis upon the so-called methodological perspectives.

**Theory:** Sociologists seek to answer questions and develop theories about the social world. Their theories usually take the form of explanations of how or why social life follows the patterns that it does.

The test of a theory is whether it stands up to the evidence. Sociologists engage in research to obtain evidence about the real world using a variety of methods and use their findings to test sociological theories.

**The AQA syllabus:**

**Methods (most of this was covered last year in your intro to methods booklet and will be briefly returned to in this booklet)**

* quantitative and qualitative methods of research; research design
* sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics
* the distinction between primary and secondary data, and between quantitative and qualitative data
* the relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods; the nature of ‘social facts’
* the theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of method(s) and the conduct of research

**Theory**

* consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories
* the concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory
* the nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific
* the relationship between theory and methods
* debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom
* the relationship between Sociology and social policy.

**EXAM QUESTIONS ON THEORY AND METHODS**

10 mark questions:

* The 10 mark could either be a question on a method or a theory e.g.

Outline and explain two advantages/disadvantages/uses of a method in sociological research [10]

OR

Outline and explain two arguments against/for [a theoretical view] [10]

20 mark questions:

* 20 mark question that asks you to:

Using material from Item C and your knowledge, evaluate the usefulness [of a theory/methodological theoretical approach] in understanding society [20]

**Sources for this booklet**

Sources to use:

* Revision books and resources
* Page 365-443 of the Browne textbook (in the classroom/borrowed from the library).
* Page 158-173 of the Webb textbook (copies are in the classroom, library and some sections will be scanned in on Godalming online)
* Extension reading: Haralambos 8th ed. page 952-1023
* Additional readings on Godalming online in the crime and deviance section, theory and methods, additional readings.
* Short videos of different theories which can be found on Godalming online in the crime and deviance section: theory and methods

**RESEARCH METHODS**

**PRACTICAL, ETHICAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES**

Use the following video to recap PET issues

[Practical, Ethical and Theoretical Issues in Sociological Research](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/practical-ethical-and-theoretical-issues-in-sociological-research)

**PRACTICAL ISSUES**

**ETHICAL ISSUES**

**THEORETICAL ISSUES**

**CHOICE OF TOPIC**

What are the factors that influence a choice of method for sociologists? Use the following video

[Research Methods: Choice of Topic and Methods](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-choice-of-topic-and-methods)

**SUMMARY OF THE VIDEO**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Theoretical issues** | |
| Sociologists’ choice of method and topic is also influenced by their methodological perspective – their view of what society is and how we should study it. Often sociologists have a theoretical approach to studying society which influences the method they choose. | |
| **POSITIVISM**  **Positivists** sees the process of studying society as a science, repeating research, generating statistics, numbers, trends, ratios and comparisons that are high in **RELIABILITY** and **objectivity** (the ability for researchers to remove their own beliefs from what they are studying). Durkheim, a positivist argued we can observe **social facts**- society is ‘out there’. These findings can then be turned into laws just like scientific ones and the researcher can remain **value free** and objective. Therefore, society can be understood, predicted and controlled. This is a **macro** approach, which aims to use large samples to generalise to the target population. Thisallows these types of researchers to identify **trends** (patterns).  **Key issues for Positivists:**  **Quantitative methods** - Positivists tend to use quantitative methods – the research focuses on measurement and the collection of numerical data (statistics and number crunching) that reflect their belief in a scientific approach. Also, by using scientific quantitative data the researcher can generate CAUSE and EFFECT relationships.  **Reliability** – the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions or all occasions. Data is reliable when different researchers using the same method, or the same researcher using it at another time, obtain the same results.   * For example, if one person tests the temperature of water at boiling point, then another person does it a week later, you would expect the results to be the same i.e. reliable - as long as the data collection instrument (i.e. the thermometer) is trustworthy. * A survey using structured questionnaires tends to be reliable. The same results should be gained, regardless of who is asking the questions. This is particularly so with regard to simple structured questions (for example, a person’s age or gender).   **Representativeness / Generalisability**   * This is related to sampling technique (see later booklet). How far is the individual or group under study typical of the research population? * If they are typical, then what is true of them is also true of others. We can therefore *generalise* from this sample. * Researchers who use quantitative data can use complex statistical tools to enable them to see how representativeness their sample is. * Research based on in-depth qualitative methods must always be questioned in terms of representativeness because they tend to involve very few people.   **Other issues**   * Researchers must be value free by excluding their own attitudes and subjectivity from the research. This objectivity allows the research to be more reliable. | **INTERPRETIVISM**  **Interpretivists** argue that the study of society as a science is not possible as the things in it (**people**) are not identical and cannot be treated as the same. Therefore, a different approach is needed in order to gain a ‘true’ understanding; to discover an individual’s meanings, experiences and reasons for behaviour, an in-depth enquiry as to why the individual behaved as they did. This will produce more **VALID** findings. Interpretivists favour a **micro** approach, which prefers in-depth data from small scale research. The aim is to explore people’s lived experience in depth to understand them from their point of view.  Weber used the term **action** to describe the way people behave. Action is human behaviour which has a sense of **purpose.** Everyone attaches meaning to their behaviour all the time, because we are naturally self-aware. This simple idea is so important because it underlines the *difference between studying humans and studying the subject matter* of *natural science.* People worry, reflect, have ambitions, consider the future - they are self-aware, or have **consciousness.** The importance of understanding the meanings behind actions for the actors themselves – ***verstehen*** in German **–** meant for Weber that his sociology was **not simply a study of materialist changes but also a study of the importance of ideas.**  **Blumer** argued sociologists should seek to immerse themselves in the lives of those experiencing the phenomena they are trying to understand.  **Key issues for Interpretivists:**  **Qualitative methods** – Interpretivists tend to use qualitative methods - the research focuses on interpreting meaning and feelings and is expressed in words rather than numbers.  **Validity** – the ability of the method to provide a true picture or mirror image of what is being studied.   * The real aim of sociological research should be to experience the social world of the people you are studying; to develop EMPATHY with them and put yourself in their ‘shoes’ (sometimes referred to as VERSTEHEN). * Qualitative methods (such as unstructured interviews) tend to produce valid data since the interviewer can spend time probing and questioning the respondent and really make them think about their answers. * Structured questionnaires tend to be low in validity because they are often a measure of what people think they ought to say and think, rather than what they actually do – social desirability. Also, people do not spend much time thinking about answers; the closed-ended nature of questions may restrict all possible answers / maybe ambiguous in meaning.   **Other issues**   * **Reflexivity**- researchers know they can never truly be value free so seek to constantly evaluate their own views and the impact they might have on the research findings. * Respondent validation- allows for the reduction of researcher impostion (the impact the researcher could have on the validity of the research). This validation gets the participants to check their information and data to make sure it has been portrayed accurately. |
| **Realism**  These researchers adopt a positivist and interpretivist approach by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. They use a mixed method approach to gain the advantages of both approaches, such as gaining data that is both reliable and valid. Increasingly sociologists are taking this approach because it allows them to triangulate their data to check for accuracy, and allow for a more holistic understanding of their respondents.  Realism attempts to regain the ground lost by interpretivist sociologists who could be seen to reduce sociology to simply subjectivity, abandoning the idea of science. Realists emphasise that science for the most part, consists not of proving data by reference to facts which can be proved without contradiction, but of testing one theory against another, comparing and available evidence to assess the best available theory at the time. They have no particular fondness for any specific method, but often engage with a broad mixture of methods to gain a more holistic approach to the subject matter at hand.  Realists argue that we should not try to study the world in the same way as the natural sciences e.g. by coming up with ‘facts’, instead we should uncover the impact of social systems on people.  E.g. the impact of the economy on people’s jobs and aspirations, much in the same way that Willis did- he used a Marxist approach combined with an interpretivist methodological approach to uncover the impact of capitalism on working class boys. | **Feminism**  Although feminism is a distinctive theoretical **perspective** it is difficult to analyse as a distinct **methodology**. What distinguishes feminist methodology (methodologies?) is the aims an intention of its research.  **Abbott and Wallace** (1990) indicate a concern in feminist research to move away "from the positivistic view of sociology as a science". They go on to describe feminist methodology as necessarily committed to the "*emancipation of women*". There is no consensus among feminists even about the proper study of this methodology. Some argue that feminist research "*should be research by women, for women and with women*," whilst others suggest that it should "*include both men and women in its 'subject matter', explicitly recognising and investigating the sex/gender system that exists in the society being researched*." Either way, there is a commitment to improving women’s position is society.  Reinharz’s (spelled incorrectly in the textbook) emphasis on “women’s ways of knowing”, implies that women researchers bring a different sort of consciousness to research. The four factors outlined in the textbook, i.e.,   * Grounded in feminist theory * Aiming to bring about social change * Including the researcher as participant and not as the “other” * Stressing the importance of the relationship/rapport between researcher and researchedis echoed by other feminist theorists.   Ann **Oakley** in her studies on childbirth and housework offers something of a model of feminist methodology. For her, it is essential that the relationship between researcher and researched is reciprocal – involving the mutual exchange of information, ideas and personal experiences. **Reflexivity** thus becomes a central part of the research process |

**Use the following videos (click on the words), the notes above to summarise the different theoretical approaches**

[Research Methods: Positivism](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-positivism)

[[Research Methods: Interpretivism](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-positivism)](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-interpretivism)

[[Objectivity and Subjectivity in Sociological Research](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-positivism)](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/objectivity-and-subjectivity-in-sociological-research)

**Research Methodological approaches:**

Using the previous pages and p.159, 175 of the Webb textbook and your previous notes make a summary of the following approaches to highlight key issues and concepts covered by each.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Positivism | Interpretivism | Realism | Feminist Methodology |
|  |  |  |  |

**Other methodological approaches and strategies**

**Mixed methods:** It is important that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative traditions is not over-stated. It may well aid our understanding of this topic to think in terms of a qualitative / quantitative divide, but the reality in terms of practical social research is the tendency to use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative techniques as part of a triangulation or methodological pluralism approach. For example, Bhatti’s (1999) research uses interviews with children, their parents and teachers, a closed questionnaire survey and participant observation inside and outside the classroom to construct an ethnographic account of Asian children at home and school. The use of such combinations of quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed methods) has actually been the norm for some time. The multiple or mixed methods approach has generally been used in two broad ways although the reasons for using each approach often overlap:

1. **Methodological pluralism** – this is where the researcher employs more than one method of research in order to build up a fuller and more comprehensive picture of social life. For example, qualitative research might be used to produce extracts of conversations that gives life to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the patterns and trends revealed by the statistics produced by official reports or questionnaires.
2. **Triangulatio**n – this refers to the use of multiple or mixed methods to cross-check and verify the reliability of a particular research tool and the validity of the data collected. Usually, triangulation involves combining quantitative and qualitative methods in order to check on the accuracy of the data gathered by each method. For example, questionnaire responses might be checked by carrying out interviews with key respondents.

**Fitness for purpose** – this means that researchers will select the method(s) most suitable for the collection of the data they require, and as long as the method fits what they need (the purpose) it really does not matter if it produces quantitative or qualitative data. The idea of mixed methods it that it enables the researcher to break free from the qualitative / quantitative divide, thus allowing greater flexibility.

**Other important method concepts:**

**Longitudinal studies -** One of the problems of sociological research, especially survey style research, is that it is a snapshot of the social context which it is studying. It is, therefore, difficult to provide a sense of history or of social change. The longitudinal study is an attempt to respond to this problem by carrying out the study over a prolonged period of time with an aim to revisit the sample of key intervals throughout the research process to track key trends and patterns.

**Ethnography -** Ethnography literally means writing about the way of life, or culture, of social groups. Ethnographic studies use mainly participant observation and often unstructured interviews to provide an in-depth account of a social group. It can also use personal diaries to build up a fuller picture of a person’s life. The purpose of ethnography is to describe the culture and life-style of the group of people being studied in a way that is as faithful as possible to the way they see themselves and to the social contexts in which their behaviour occurs. The idea is not so much to seek causes and explanations, as is often the case with survey style research, but rather to ‘tell it like it is’. Ethnography is about imitating real life. Weber called this ‘verstehen’ – being able to empathise with or think life the people that are being studied.

**Case studies –**Some sociologists use them as a research method that focuses on the exploration of a ‘case’ in depth. For example some ethnographic studies can be considered as case studies of a particular location or event. Other researchers use case studies as a research strategy that focuses on a specific place/event/ social group in depth whilst using other research methods to access the data required. Case studies are generally used to produce data that is high in validity, but have been accused of lacking representativeness

**RESEARCH METHODS RECAP**

1. Get out all your old research methods booklets and find the PET evaluation sheets for each method (which will be in each booklet).
2. Complete the match up sheets, to provide you with a summary of the key concepts in Research Methods and studies that we have covered.
3. Watch the following videos to remind yourself of the different sorts of methods

**RESEARCH METHODS IN DETAIL**

[Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-in-sociology-quantitative-and-qualitative-methods)

[Research Methods: Questionnaires](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-questionnaires)

[Research Methods – Interviews](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-interviews)

[Research Methods: Observations](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-observations)

[Research Methods: Experiments](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-experiments)

[Research Methods: Official Statistics](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-official-statistics)

[Research Methods: Personal and Historical Documents](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/research-methods-personal-and-historical-documents)

1. With ‘The Hectic Teacher’ revision notes (below). Use your PET sheets and information from the videos to add detail to this and include a relevant study to as many of the methods as you can.

**MATCH UP THE METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPT TO ITS DEFINITION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Validity** | 1. If the sample is representative their data can be applied to the target population i.e. because the sample thinks this, this group thinks it too |
| 1. **Reliability** | 1. Excluding personal bias or opinion from research. Positivists would argue that it’s important to be free from this in research. |
| 1. **Representativeness** | 1. Imposing your own beliefs or attitudes during the data collection or data analysis stages of research, which could bias the findings |
| 1. **Generalisability** | 1. Term coined by Weber. Means understanding with empathy (you can put yourself in someone else’s shoes) |
| 1. **Verstehen** | E. The characteristics of the researcher might influence the response of the participant i.e. males interviewing female victims of domestic violence |
| 1. **Rapport** | F. The data gains a mirror image and true picture of reality |
| 1. **Objectivity** | G. Based on how we personally feel and our own view. |
| 1. **Subjectivity** | H. The characteristics of the sample match those of the target population (the group the researcher is interested in studying) |
| 1. **Reflexivity** | I. Getting the respondent to check that their responses have been recorded accurately and to see if they wish to add anything else |
| 1. **Value freedom** | J. A relationship based on trust with the researcher and participant – helps gain more valid data |
| 1. **Operationalisation** | K. When being observed the behaviour of the participant may change. |
| 1. **Researcher imposition** | L. The ability of the researcher to reflect upon their possible influence on the results and consider how their point of view may have changed during the course of their research. It helps to combat things like ‘going native’ or being too subjective |
| 1. **Respondent validation** | M. Being in an interview might make someone’s behaviour change e.g. being in a stressful situation |
| 1. **Hawthorne effect** | N. The approach can be repeated to gain similar results – the measure is accurate |
| 1. **Interview effect** | O. Clearly defining a concept so that it can be measured and demonstrating to readers how the concept has been used. |
| 1. **Interviewer effect** | P. The ability to remove personal bias and judgment from decisions about research and data gathered. Similar to value freedom. |

**SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH: STUDIES MATCH UP**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Conducted unstructured interviews with women who had been the victims of domestic violence** | 1. **Venkatesh, ‘Gang Leader for a Day’** |
| 1. **Is completed every year. It uses a face to face, structured interview to determine the experiences of people who have been the victim of crime. Sample of 40000, highly representative. Uses closed, pre-coded questions** | 1. **Official statistics – collected by or on behalf of the government** |
| 1. **Spent seven years conducting an overt participant observation with members of a Chicago gang. Could be accused of ‘going native’** | 1. **Crime Survey of England and Wales** |
| 1. **Birth, death, crime rates would be an example of these types of methods** | 1. **Paul Willis, ‘Learning to Labour’** |
| 1. **This method involves the researcher observing but not joining in on the activities of the group. This researcher observed children’s play at a distance by going to parks.** | 1. **Content analysis. Lesley Best did this by exploring the dominance of gender stereotypes in children’s books.** |
| 1. **Carried out research into obedience. Had participants ‘electrocute’ a learner who they thought was in another room. A form of lab experiment that would not be used by sociologists** | 1. **Rosenthal and Jacobson, ‘Pygmalion in the Classroom’. Example of a field experiment – variables are controlled. Not typically used by sociologists.** |
| 1. **Involves counting the number of times a factor or issue arises within either a written response or in printed text, such as books or newspapers.** | 1. **Dobash and Dobash, ‘Violence against Wives’** |
| 1. **Researched 12 lads to find out why they were non-conforming. Conducted participant observation, focus groups, diaries and unstructured interviews.** | 1. **Exam results, Ofsted reports** |
| 1. **Investigated a Glasgow gang by going undercover and pretending to be one of the boys. Worked at a school that one of the lads went to, who provided him access. Ended up taking drugs and getting involved in a fight.** | 1. **Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyle Survey** |
| 1. **Studied paintings to see how the experience of childhood had changed over time. This is an example of the use of historical documents, which could also include diaries, letters, photos etc from the past** | 1. **Non participant observation. Holden ‘Investigating children’s play in mixed communities’** |
| 1. **Used a mix method approach to see why some young people choose not to go to university. Undertook semi structured interviews, focus groups and photo diaries (form of personal document).** | 1. **James Patrick, ‘A Glasgow Gang observed’** |
| 1. **Examples of documents that are in the public domain and anyone can access** | 1. **Stanley Milgram, ‘Obedience to Authority’** |
| 1. **Conducted structured interviews and structured questionnaires. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic they used a pilot study to start with** | 1. **Philippe Aries** |
| 1. **Tested children in an American elementary school and labelled some children as ‘spurters’ – this was done randomly. Came back later and found the ‘spurters’ had done better.** | 1. **Louise Archer, ‘University’s not for me, I’m a Nike Person’** |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Method** | | **Description** | | **Practical** | | | | **Ethical** | | | | **Theoretical** | | | |
| **+** | | **-** | | **+** | | **-** | | **+** | | **-** | |
| **Open**  **Questionnaire** | | A self complete form with questions which allow the respondent to answer in as much detail as they want. | | Easy Cheap  Lack of researcher effects  Quick to analyses and reach conclusions | | Low response rate  Misunderstand the question  Answer may not fit those given (closed)  Leading Questions | | Informed consent given by completing  Anonymous | | Questions may be sensitive. | | Detailed data (Open)  Reliable  Large Sample  Easy to quantify and analyse (Closed)  Detachment and objectivity | | Participants may lie  Someone other than the intended participant may answer  Right answerism Lack of rapport | |
| **Closed Questionnaire** | | A self complete form with questions which give a set of responses that the respondent can choose from. | |
| **Web based**  **Questionnaire** | | A self complete form which is sent out via the internet or by using a site such as survey monkey.. | |
| **Unstructured Interview** | | A conversation between the researcher and the participant where the questions are based on the responses given. | | Allows researcher to build rapport with the participants.  (US) Flexibility  Allows for clarification of the questions. | | Time  Cost & Training of Interviewers | | (US) Good for sensitive topics | | Questions could cause harm if of a sensitive nature. | | In depth detailed data  (S) Reliable Hard to Quantify | | Demand Characteristics  (US) Unreliable Small Sample  (G) Peer Group  Influence | |
| **Structured Interview** | | A conversation between the researcher and the participant where the questions are set in advance. | |
| **Group Interview** | | Where the interview can be structured or unstructured but involves more than one participant. | |
| **Overt Observation** | | Where a researcher tells the participants that they are being observed and what they are being observed for. | | Flexible  [O] Researcher can ask questions  Only option with some  groups. | | Time  Cost  Researcher effect  Requires a certain skill set not all researchers will have.  [C] Relies on memory  Some groups can be hard to access | |  | | [C] lacks informed consent.  Privacy can be breached.  [P] Going Native | | In depth detailed data  Allows for Verstehen | | Hawthorne Effect Hard to Quantify Small Sample Unreliable | |
| **Covert Observation** | | Where the researcher doesn’t tell the participants that they are being observed until after the study is complete. | |
| **Participant Observation** | | Where the researcher becomes a member of the group they are researching. | |
| **Non- Participation Observation** | | Where the researcher watches the group from the outside without taking part. | |
| **Experiments - Lab** | | A study that takes place in a label where the researcher is able to manipulate and control all the variables. | | Variables are controlled. | | Time Cost | | Harm to participants –  Stress | | Deception in order to deal with researcher effects | | Highly reliable  Causation can be determined | | Validity – not normal setting  Researcher Effects Small Sample | |
| **Experiments –**  **Field** | | **Field Experiments** take place in real-life settings such as a classroom, the work place or even the high street. | |
| **Method** | | **Description** | | **Practical** | | **Ethical** | | | | **Theoretical** | | | |
| **+** | **-** | **+** | | **-** | | **+** | | **-** | |
| **Official**  **Statistics** | | Numerical data that is produced by  government of government agencies. | | Cheap  Easily accessible | May not ask the questions specific to the research | No ethical considerations in using official  statistics. | | | | Large sample  Valid  Reliable | |  | |
| **Unofficial**  **Statistics** | | Numerical data that is collected by  charities and other organisations. | | Cheap  Easily accessible | May not ask the questions specific to the research | No ethical considerations in using unofficial  statistics. | | | | Large Sample  Valid  Reliable | | Could be biased to the views of the organisation. | |
| **Personal Documents** | | Documents such as personal diaries, letters and other personal correspondence. | | Cheap | Can be hard to access |  | | Invasion of privacy Informed Consent Confidentiality | | In depth and detailed | | Open to interpretation  Personal view  Unreliable | |
| **Public Documents** | | Government documents that have been released such as OFSTED reports | | Some can be easy to access.  Cheap | Can take time to gain access under FOI Act | No ethical considerations | | | | In depth data | | Unreliable  Open to interpretation  Biased | |
| **Historical Documents** | | Original documents that contain important historical information about a person, place, or event. | | Cheap Time  Can be easy to access | May not be specific to the research being conducted |  | | Confidentiality  Invasion of Privacy | | In depth data | | Open to interpretation  Unreliable Personal View | |
| **Prior Research** | | Research that has been carried out in the same area or on the same topic. | | Cheap  Easy to access Time | May not be exactly the same in terms of research aims. | No ethical considerations | | | |  | |  | |
| **Content**  **Analysis** | | **Formal Content Analysis** is a quantitative approach to analysing mass media content and involves developing a system of classification to analyse the key features of media sources | | Cheap  Easy to access | Time | No ethical considerations | | | | Reliable | | Open to  interpretation | |

**Exam Practice**

**METHODS**

* Outline and explain two advantages/disadvantages of [a method] [10 marks]

Methods could include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **QUANTITATIVE** | **QUALITATIVE** |
| * Laboratory experiments * Field experiments * Questionnaires * Structured interviews * Official statistics * Non-official statistics * Non-participant observation- overt/covert * Content analysis | * Unstructured interviews * Semi-structured interviews * Group interviews/ focus groups * Participant observation- overt/ covert * Documents |

* Outline and explain two reasons why positivists prefer quantitative data [10 marks]
* Outline and explain two reasons why interpretivists prefer qualitative data [10 marks]
* Outline and explain two reasons why positivists are critical of qualitative methods [10 marks]
* Outline two ethical problems often associated with qualitative research method [10 marks]
* Outline and explain two practical advantages of quantitative methods [10 marks]

***EXTENSION TASKS***

***If you are looking to study Sociology at university we would suggest accessing the following content, which we have not had time to cover on the course. Each set of resources has a taught lesson on a video and handouts which go with it.***

**Sociology as a science**

**Sociology and value freedom**

**Sociology and social policy**

Resources can be found [here](https://online.godalming.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=927&sectionid=9728)

And Tutor2U content on these topics via the following links

[Is Sociology a Science?](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/is-sociology-a-science)

[Sociology and Social Policy](https://www.tutor2u.net/sociology/reference/sociology-and-social-policy)

**SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY**

**THEORY AND METHODS CROSS OVER IN SOCIOLOGY:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key debates VS** | |
| **CONFLICT – society is based on inequality between different groups: Marxism, Feminism** | **CONSENSUS – society is based on agreement and works in harmony: Functionalism** |
| **STRUCTURALIST/MACRO – social forces shape behaviour and individuals are passive: Marxism, Functionalism** | **SOCIAL ACTION/MICRO – society is the product of small scale interactions. Individuals have free will and society is socially constructed through ideas: Interactionism** |
| **POSITIVISM – the methodological approach of structuralists. Society can be studied scientifically/objectively/using quantitative data to uncover laws and rules about how society works.** | **INTERPRETIVISM – the methodological approach of action theorists. Sociology cannot be scientific or value free. Need to look at the ideas, beliefs and interactions of humans to see why they behave as they do** |

**Define key concepts/ideas/ summarise**

**1. Functionalism**

* Durkheim’s functionalism – social facts and anomie
* Parsons’ systems theory – the organic analogy and social evolution
* Merton’s internal critique of functionalism – latent and manifest functions
* Functionalism applied to the family – Murdock’s four universal functions, Parson’s functional fit theory and the two irreducible functions of the family – socialisation and the stabilisation of adult personalities
* Functionalism applied to education – meritocracy, social solidarity, school as a bridge between home and society (particularistic and universalistic values)
* Functionalism applied to Crime and Deviance – Durkheim’s three positive functions of crime, strain theory, consensus subcultural theories.
* Functionalism and Modernisation Theory – Parsons’ traditional and modern values and the evolutionary model of society
* Functionalism and research methods – Durkheim’s Positivist approach to suicide

**2. Marxism**

* Karl Marx – the basics: bourgeoisie and proletariat, exploitation, alienation, false consciousness, revolution.
* Gramsci’s humanistic Marxism – hegemony, dual consciousness and organic intellectuals
* Althusser’s structuralist Marxism – the repressive/ideological state apparatus.
* Marxism applied to the Family – capitalism, private property and the family, The family as a safe haven, ideological functions, also see Marxist Feminism
* Marxism applied to education – the ideological state apparatus, reproduction of class inequality, legitimation of class inequality, correspondence principle
* Marxism applied to Crime and Deviance – • Private Property and Crime, The costs of Corporate Crime, Selective Law Enforcement, Criminogenic Capitalism (Dog Eat Dog“ Society)

**3. Feminism**

* Liberal Feminism – does not seek revolutionary changes: they want changes to take place within the existing structure; the creation of equal opportunities is the main aim of liberal feminists – e.g. the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act
* Marxist Feminism – capitalism rather than patriarchy is the principal source of women’s oppression, and capitalists as the main beneficiaries, through the housewife role for example; overthrowing capitalism remains the main objective.
* Radical Feminism – Society is patriarchal, dominated and ruled by men – men are the ruling class, and women the subject class. Rape, violence and pornography some of the key tools through which men control women; separatism can be part of the solution.
* Difference Feminism – women are not a homogenous group, they experience disadvantage in different ways.
* Postmodern Feminism – critiqued preceding Feminist theory as being part of the masculinist Enlightenment Project; concerned with language (discourses) and the relationship between power and knowledge rather than ‘politics and opportunities‘.

**4. Social Action Theory**

* Max Weber: Verstehen, and Social Change – observation alone is not enough to understand human action, we need empathetic understanding. Gaining Verstehen is the main point of Sociology, e.g. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism).
* Symbolic Interactionism – people’s self-concepts based on their understanding of how others perceive them (the looking glass self); need to understand meanings to understanding actions; social roles are not specific or fixed; they can be interpreted in various different ways.
* Goffman’s Dramaturgical Theory – People are actors on a ‘social stage’ who actively create an impression of themselves
* Labelling Theory – the definitions (meanings) people impose on situations or on other people can have real consequences (even if those definitions are not based in reality)

**5. Post Modernism and Late Modernism**

**Postmodernism**

* Economy and Politics = Industrial economies, jobs for life; Nation State, most people vote and are in trades unions; Organised/ Heavy Capitalism and the Welfare State
* Society/ Culture reflects the underlying class and patriarchal structures; Nuclear family the norm, marriage for life; Identities shaped/ constrained by class position/ sex; Media – one way communication, reflects ‘reality’
* Knowledge – The Enlightenment – Science/ Objective Knowledge/ Truth and Progress
* Sociology – Positivism/ Functionalism – doing research to find how societies function and gradually building a better world; Marxism/ Feminism –emancipation.

**Late Modernism**

* Economy/ Politics  = Post-Industrial, service sector, portfolio workers and consumption is central; Declining power of the Nation State; Disorganised Capitalism/ Liquid Capitalism (Bauman)
* Society/ Culture – Culture is free from structure – it is more Diverse and Fragmented ; Relationships more diverse; More Individual Freedom to shape identities; Media – more global, two- way, hyperreality (Baudrillard)
* Knowledge – Critique of the Enlightenment; Incredulity towards Metanarratives (Lyotard)
* Sociology – Narrative histories; Deconstruction (Lyotard) and Destabilising Theory.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Social Order** | **Micro** |
| **Macro** | **Consensus theory** |
| **Positivism** | **Interpretivism** |
| **Conflict theory** | **Ideology** |
| **Determinism** | **Structuralism** |
| **Modernity** | **Postmodernity** |
| **Action theory** | **Integrated approaches** |

**KEY CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY – CAN YOU DEFINE THEM?**



**THEORY EXAMPLE QUESTIONS**

**Writing a theory essay**

**20 MARK ESSAY THEORY QUESTIONS**

These questions have an item and will get you to do several possible things:

Evaluate the approach of a particular theory

Evaluate the contribution a theory has made to our understanding of society

Evaluate the view that conflict approaches are more useful than consensus approaches (or visa versa)

Evaluate the view that action/micro approaches are more useful than structural/macro approaches

Evaluate the contribution of modernist theories [functionalism/marxism] as compared to postmodern approaches

These questions need an introduction that clearly outlines the debate in the essay and then a range of paragraphs (suggestion of 3) that compare the approach/es in the question. Come to a conclusion. They need you to show a clear understanding of key concepts within the theory and theoretical approaches e.g. consensus vs conflict views, structure vs action, modernity vs postmodernity.

Item: Functionalism is a consensus theory. It sees society as based on a set of shared values and this value consensus is the basis for social order. It is also a systems theory. Its emphasises the way the social system shapes social institutions and the behaviour patterns of individuals. Society is seen as a system with its own existence and needs.

* Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate the claim that functionalism understates both the extent of conflict in society and the ability of social actors to create society through interaction [20 marks]

Item: All feminists argue that women occupy a subordinate position in society and all feminists wish to end this state of affairs. However, they differ about both the causes of the problem and its solution. For example, liberal feminists argue that traditional attitudes and cultural stereotypes about women’s abilities have kept them subordinated, but that changes in laws, policies and socialisation patterns will gradually bring about gender equality. However, both radical and marxist feminists argue that women’s oppression has deeper roots and requires more fundamental, revolutionary changes in order to end it.

* Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of feminists to our understanding of society [20 marks]

Item: According to some sociologists, recent changes such as those associated with globalisation have resulted in a major change in the nature of today’s society. For example, postmodernists argue that we no longer live in a modern society but are now living in a media-saturated postmodern society in which it is impossible to distinguish image from reality or to change society for the better. As a result, postmodernists argue, we need new theories to explain this new kind of society. However, some critics argue that although there have been major changes in society, these are a continuation of modernity rather than a completely new type of society.

* Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate the claim that we are now living in the postmodern age [20]

Item: Marxists see class as the fundamental division in society, in which the proletariat are exploited by the capitalist owners of the means of production. The capitalist class maintain their dominance partly by force and partly by ideology control through the media, the education system and so on. However, Marxists predict that ultimately, the proletariat will overthrow capitalism by means of a revolution. For Marxists, social change is not the gradual evolutionary process seen by consensus theories. However, other sociologists argue that class is not the only basis for inequality and that revolutions have failed to occur in advanced capitalist societies.

* Applying material from the item and your knowledge, evaluate the contribution of different Marxist theorists to an understanding of society [20 marks]