

Theory and methods

For sociological research methods, which you will have studied in Year 1, refer to Student Guide 1 (see pages 27–40.)

Consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories

Functionalism

- Functionalism is a 'macro', large-scale structural theory that tends to use **positivist** methods to understand society and uncover the impact of social forces on individuals' behaviour. Durkheim (1897), who laid the foundations for modern functionalism, used a scientific approach to demonstrate how suicide was a social fact caused by factors external to the individual (see the section on sociology as a science).
- Parsons (1951) developed Durkheim's ideas into a systematic theory of society. The starting point is the **organic analogy**. Just like a living organism, society is made of **interconnected** and **interdependent** parts. Just as different parts of the body, such as the heart and brain, must work together to bring about good health, so different institutions, such as the family and the education system, must work together to bring about and maintain social order.
- Parsons argues that society has four basic needs (or **functional prerequisites**) that are met by four different **subsystems**:
 - Adaptation** Society has to provide a basic standard of living. Subsystem: economic, through institutions such as factories and the banking system.
 - Goal attainment** Society has to have decision-making procedures. Subsystem: political, through institutions such as political parties.
 - Integration** Society must develop institutions to ensure shared goals and reduce conflict. Subsystems: education, religion and the media.
 - Latency** Relates to how individuals are able to cope with society over time. Subsystem: kinship, through institutions such as the family. Parsons divided latency into **pattern maintenance**, such as families socialising their members into acceptable forms of behaviour and roles, and **tension management**, which ensures people are motivated to perform their roles and not oppose society.
- Functionalism argues that in order for the various parts of society to work together there must be **value consensus**. Basic norms and values, such as basic manners, are passed down through **primary socialisation** in the family while agents of **secondary socialisation**, such as the education system, socialise children into the wider culture and values of achievement and competition that are required in the workplace. In addition to socialisation, value consensus and social integration

are also achieved through **social control**. This can occur through **informal agencies** of social control, such as the family using positive sanctions such as rewards, or through punishments administered by **formal agencies** of social control such as the criminal justice system.

- Both Durkheim and Parsons argue that industrialisation led to a change from a **traditional** to a **modern** society. Parsons argues that different **pattern variables** (typical patterns of norms) exist in each society. The pattern variables that existed in traditional societies, such as collective orientation and ascribed status (i.e. status fixed at birth), were replaced in a modern society by individualism and achieved status. However, functionalists believe that social change is **evolutionary**. Parsons argues that a process of **structural differentiation** occurs whereby institutions gradually develop to meet the needs of society. For example, in a modern society some of the functions performed by the kinship system, such as providing skills for future jobs, have been taken over by other institutions such as the education system.

Merton — an internal critique

- Merton (1957), a functionalist, argues that Parsons was wrong to assume that all institutions were functional for all parts of society. He argues that some institutions could be **dysfunctional** for society, such as religion leading to conflict and division in society. Merton also disagrees with Parsons that all institutions, such as the nuclear family, are **functionally indispensable**. He argues that there may be **functional alternatives**, such as same-sex parents being able to fulfil the function of effective socialisation. Merton feels that Parson's analysis of society is too simplistic. For example, not all institutions are interdependent and there may be **latent** (hidden) functions as well as **manifest** (intended) ones.

Evaluation

- + Functionalism shows the macro influence of society over the individual.
- + Value consensus does exist in society. Different institutions do work together.
- Functionalists such as Durkheim were not as scientific as is claimed. For example, he did not operationalise concepts such as integration in his study of suicide.
- **Marxists** argue that functionalists ignore conflict and differences in power in society.
- **Interactionists** and **postmodernists** argue that people are more reflexive and are not puppets whose actions are determined by pattern variables such as universalistic norms in schools (illustrated by students' rejecting teacher labels).
- **Postmodernism** regards functionalism as a **metanarrative** that cannot explain the diversity that exists in values in society today.
- **Conflict theorists** and **postmodernists** would argue that functionalism over-emphasises the level of consensus in society. For example, feminists claim that, as well as ignoring patriarchy, functionalists fail to explain differing attitudes towards gender roles in society today.
- Functionalists' view of social change is criticised, particularly by **Marxists**, who argue that change can be revolutionary as well as evolutionary.

Exam tip

To illustrate general functionalist ideas, be prepared to refer to topic areas such as education. For example, while Durkheim argued that the teaching of history would help develop social solidarity and a sense of belonging to society, Parsons felt that education acted as a bridge between the particularistic values of the home and the universalistic values of the workplace.

Marxism

- Like functionalism, Marxism is a macro, structural perspective that attempts to study the influence of social institutions over individuals in a scientific manner. Rather than it being based on consensus, however, Marx argued that capitalist society is based on conflict between two social classes, the **bourgeoisie** (Bs), who own the **means of production**, and the **proletariat** (Ps), who are the working class who hire out their labour in return for a wage. The Bs seek to maximise profits, or **surplus value**, by exploiting the Ps, leading to inequalities in income and wealth. Marx argued that this inequality would increase over time and lead to a **polarisation** of the classes, which would eventually lead to revolution.
- Marx argued that because the Bs owned the **infrastructure** (the economic base) of society, they were able to have control over other institutions in society contained in the **superstructure**, such as the family, religion, the media and the education system. The function of the superstructure was to pass on ruling-class ideology to the Ps and help **reproduce** and **legitimise** the inequalities that existed in a capitalist society. As a result, the Ps are lulled into a **false class consciousness** as they are 'brainwashed' into believing that capitalism is fair and are unable to see through the oppression they suffer. Marx argued that eventually the Ps would become a '**class for itself**' and wake up to the exploitation and inequality they faced and collectively overthrow capitalism and replace it with a classless **communist** society.

Exam tip

Be prepared to link other topics you have studied to explain the Marxist view of legitimisation and reproduction. For example, discuss how Marxists Bowles and Gintis' concepts of the myth of meritocracy and the hidden curriculum can be used to examine class inequality in the education system. Similarly, the policy of the minimum wage would be viewed by Marxists as an ideological tool which justifies and legitimates low pay and exploitation while seemingly showing the caring face of capitalism.

- Like Durkheim, Marx felt society should be studied in a scientific way. He described his theory as 'scientific socialism'. This can be seen in his theory of social change, referred to as **historical materialism**. He argues that the nature of class conflict and exploitation that exists between two social groups in every epoch or time period changes over time. For example, in ancient society it was based on slavery, which changed to the ownership of land in the feudal period. Marx's 'hypothesis' was that after the proletariat revolution, there would be the establishment of the last epoch, communism, which would lead to an end to the exploitation and **alienation** that existed in capitalism.

Historical materialism A way of studying developed by Marx of how human societies collectively produce the necessities of life over time.

Alienation A feeling of a lack of control resulting from living in a society stratified into social classes. For example, on a factory assembly line, workers feel little job satisfaction due to a lack of input into the process of production.

Means of production

The things required in the process of production that can be owned, such as land, machinery, tools and factories (but not labour).

Surplus value The difference between the value of goods produced and wages paid by capitalists.

Polarisation Due to continued exploitation in capitalism, the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer.

Exam tip

Develop analysis by comparing the similarities and differences between functionalism and Marxism. For example, compare Marx's view that there are two key social institutions (with one, the infrastructure, controlling the other for the benefit of one group) with Parson's view that there are four subsystems working harmoniously for the benefit of all society.

Evaluation

- + Marxism explains inequality in society. Exploitation in the workplace does occur.
- + It shows how society, particularly economic factors, influences individuals.
- + It provides an explanation for how conflict in society developed over time.
- **Functionalists** would argue that there is too much emphasis on conflict and that there are examples of capitalism benefiting all society, such as the welfare state and improvements in the standard of living. They argue shared values do exist and that there is consensus in society.
- The revolution that Marx predicted has not occurred; capitalism has grown stronger and, as a result of globalisation, has spread across the world.
- When communist regimes have been established they have been unsuccessful, such as in China and the USSR. Marxists would counter this by arguing that they were not truly communist states.
- The polarisation of the classes has not occurred. As **Weber** argues, the middle classes have increased considerably, contrary to what Marx predicted.
- **Feminists** argue that Marxists ignore gender inequality, such as the gender pay gap.
- **Social action theorists** argue that Marxism ignores the influence of the individual on society.

Neo-Marxism

- Neo-Marxists **Althusser** and **Gramsci** are critical of the economic determinism of traditional Marxism and both develop the theory of ideology. Gramsci, to an extent, adopts a micro, social action approach and argues that individual ideas could exist independently of both the infrastructure and superstructure. He argues that the Ps are able to some extent to see through the dominant ideology and could challenge the **hegemony** of the Bs and bring about social change.
- Althusser adopts a macro, structural approach and argues that it is not people's actions but conflicts within the social structure, between economic, political and ideological levels, that will lead to social change. Althusser argues that there are two ways through which the state reproduces capitalism: **repressive state apparatuses** (RSAs) such as the police and prisons, and **ideological state apparatuses** (ISAs) such as education and the media.
- **The Frankfurt School** refers to other neo-Marxist sociologists who developed Marxist theory. Marcuse (1964) argued that Marx did not take account of the key role that the media play in shaping and manipulating our needs, e.g. through advertising. He argued that the media also divert the attention of the working class away from the injustices of capitalism by promoting trivial forms of entertainment, as seen in 'reality' TV programmes today.
- A different type of neo-Marxism using a **postmodern** framework is developed by **Harvey** (1990). He argues that, since the 1970s, capitalism has moved into a different stage as a result of factors such as **globalisation** and the move in the economy from manufacturing to the service sector. This has led to what Harvey

Hegemony The ideas and values of the ruling class that become the dominant view in society. These are transmitted via institutions such as the media, education and religion.

Table 7 A comparison of two neo-Marxist views

Gramsci — humanist		Althusser — structuralist
Humans have free will and are active. People's conscious ideas can lead to social change	Disagree	This is an illusion. Macro, structural factors will cause social change. People are puppets controlled by ideology
The working class can become class conscious and can see through dominant ideology	Disagree	This is a false consciousness constructed by ISAs — e.g. the myth of meritocracy in education
Working-class protests can lead to change — the proletariat can construct a counter-hegemonic bloc of leadership based on socialist principles	Disagree	The crisis in capitalism can lead to change as a result of contradictions between the three structures: economic, political and ideological
Coercion — force Ps to accept the rule of the Bs via the police, the army and the courts	Agree	RSAs — these coerce the Ps to comply with the will of the Bs
Consent — the media, religion, education etc. persuade the Ps to accept the ruling class rule as legitimate	Agree	ISAs — these ideologically manipulate the Ps to see capitalism as legitimate
Rejects economic determinism of Marx	Agree	Rejects economic determinism of Marx

calls 'flexible accumulation'. This involves new ways of achieving profits, such as: exploiting the labour power in developing countries to produce cheap goods, the requirement of a more flexible workforce such as being on zero-hour contracts, and technologically-based products such as tablets and mobile phones. Harvey points to other effects of these changes on capitalism, such as transnational companies being more important than nation-states, and gender, ethnicity and religion replacing social class as the main forms of division and inequality in society.

Social action theory

- Social action theories reject structural, macro theories and argue that society is constructed through people's interactions and meanings (such as in the labelling process). Theories such as **symbolic interactionism** (the full name for interactionism) are micro, small-scale theories that tend to use interpretivist methods and reject the positivist approach adopted by structural theories. Social action theory argues that individuals, rather than being controlled like puppets by the nature of capitalist society (as Marxists argue) or pattern variables (as Parsons suggests), make their own choices and that society is constructed from people's meanings and interpretations. For example, while social roles such as teacher and student exist, they are only guidelines which individuals can interpret and negotiate with others.
- While accepting the significance of objective, causal, structural factors, **Weber** (1905) argued that the role of the sociologist was to uncover **verstehen** — the subjective meanings that individuals attach to their behaviour. He argued that interpretivist methods were needed to understand social action.
- **Symbolic interactionism** (SI) refers to the process whereby people acquire knowledge about what is appropriate behaviour in different social situations. **Mead** (1934) argued that the world is composed of many different symbols, which are not fixed but have meanings which shape our behaviour. For example, a kiss can be interpreted and responded to differently depending on the context in which it

Knowledge check 15

Outline two areas of agreement between Gramsci and Althusser.

occurs. On a first date the response to a kiss would be very different to a kiss when greeting a relative at a funeral.

- **Blumer** (1962) argues that as children we develop the notion of the **self**, which is partly due to how an individual interprets their experiences, such as learning social roles through playing games, but also is a product of how others see us. **Cooley** (1922) developed the idea of the **looking-glass self** to describe how we learn to see ourselves as others see us.
- Labelling theory developed from SI and was applied by **Becker** (1961) to study how agents of social control, such as teachers and the police, are able to apply negative labels in the process of interaction. These labels, applied in education or policing, can have a negative impact on the self-esteem and status of those labelled, often leading to a **self-fulfilling prophecy** where the label is accepted (see the Interactionism: labelling theory section). **Goffman's** (1963) **dramaturgical** approach is a version of SI which argues that social interaction is like a play in which the roles of the 'actors' are only loosely 'scripted' by society.
- Unlike SI, which accepts the influence of the social structure, such as the influence of social class on educational achievement or offending, **phenomenologists** argue that society is not 'real' but socially constructed. Social class is a phenomenon that is 'made up' by society. **Schultz** (1899–1959) argues that members of society use a set of shared categories or '**typifications**' to make sense of the world and clarify any meanings that are unclear. Schultz argues that these typifications or common-sense knowledge give the impression that the world is ordered but in fact it is socially constructed.
- These ideas were developed by **ethnomethodologist Garfinkel** (1967), who argued that rather than explaining the effects of meaning (such as the way coroners label deaths), sociologists should study the methods that are used to produce meanings in the first place, i.e. how actors create meanings. Garfinkel argues that we use **reflexivity** to make sense of the world when there is confusion over the meanings of certain behaviours. For example, coroners make sense of the confusion over the cause of death by using their common-sense knowledge of 'facts' about suicide cases, such as the mental health of the deceased or their marital status.

Exam tip

Be prepared to apply the ideas of Garfinkel and phenomenologists such as Atkinson to the debate as to whether sociology is a science. They totally reject Durkheim's positivist, scientific approach and argue that the official statistics that are used to explain suicide are socially constructed. They would argue that these statistics tell us more about the common-sense assumptions of coroners and cannot be used to make 'laws' about the causes of suicide.

- **Giddens** (1984) combines theories of structure and social action in his theory of **structuration**. He argues that while individuals are restricted by structural factors such as norms, customs and laws, they have choice and can respond to these factors in different ways. Giddens argues that increasingly in a late-modern society (see the section on modernity and post-modernism) social structures are open to change by the actions of individuals.

Exam tip

Be prepared to discuss the differences between the various social action approaches. While labelling theory has been criticised for seeing the individual as passively accepting labels, Goffman argues that through impression management individuals actively seek to present themselves in a way they wish others to see them.

Reflexivity The use of common-sense knowledge to make sense of social reality.

Evaluation

- + Social action theory, with its emphasis on interpretivist methodology, has provided a rich insight into the interaction process in small-scale settings.
- + Social action theories are voluntaristic; they demonstrate how people have free will and are able to shape society.
- + Social action theories such as interactionism avoid the deterministic nature of structural theories such as Marxism and functionalism.
- **Structural theories** argue that social action theory fails to take account of the wider social context in which interaction takes place. It fails to explain the origins of labels and symbolic meanings.
- **Functionalists** argue that social action theory ignores the influence of consistent patterns, such as shared norms, that influence people's behaviour. Ethnomethodology, in particular, has been criticised for denying the existence of a wider society.
- **Marxists and feminists** argue that social action theory fails to fully explore the power differences between individuals and social groups in society. Becker does respond to this criticism and argues that labelling theory does examine the power relationship between those labelled and the agents of social control.
- Giddens' structuration theory has been criticised by **Marxists** for over-estimating the extent to which individuals can change social structures.

Feminism

Like Marxism, feminism is a conflict theory that tends to adopt a structuralist approach. However, feminists argue that inequalities are based on **patriarchy**, or male dominance, rather than on social class. Feminism seeks to show how social institutions such as the family, education and media can contribute to the oppression of women. While quantitative data would be used to show structural patterns of gender inequality, such as the pay gap, most feminist research is qualitative and interpretivist in nature. For example, **Dobash and Dobash (1979)** used informal, unstructured interviews in order to gain an understanding of the experiences of women who had been the victims of domestic violence. Feminism is critical of traditional sociology for being **malestream**, as it ignores the viewpoint of women. There are three main types of feminist theory (see Table 8).

Further evaluation points on feminist theories

- + Liberal feminists would argue that Marxist feminists and radical feminists fail to recognise how women's position has improved as a result of changes in legislation and attitudes to gender roles.
- + **Dual systems** feminists such as Hartman (1979) criticise Marxist feminism and liberal feminism for being too simplistic and argue that capitalism and patriarchy are intertwined to form '**patriarchal capitalism**'.
- Due to its structural nature, feminism can be accused of being over-deterministic. It does not take account of how individual females may interpret their situation. As **Hakim (2000)** argues, not all women feel oppressed by being housewives and mothers.

Knowledge check 16

What is the difference between phenomenology and symbolic interactionism?

Reserve army of labour

A Marxist concept to explain how groups, such as women, can be brought into the labour market when there is a shortage of workers. When there is a boom in a capitalist economy they will be hired; when there is a recession they will be the first to be fired.

Table 8 Feminist theories

	Liberal feminism (LF) — Oakley (1974)	Marxist feminism (MF) — Barrett (1980)	Radical feminism (RF) — Firestone (1972)
What is the problem?	Lack of opportunities in education, employment and politics. Women's oppression has been maintained through sexist gender socialisation — e.g. the belief that the housewife-mother role is the primary role for women	Capitalism with its patriarchal ideology controls and exploits women in a number of ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the unpaid role of housewife, which nurtures the current and next generation of workers absorbing the anger of male workers, e.g. domestic violence part of the reserve army of labour 	Men are the 'enemy'. Patriarchy exists in all areas of society. Due to childbirth, women are dependent on men, who oppress and exploit them in all areas of life, from sexual relations in the home to discrimination in the workplace
How should it be solved?	Society's socialisation patterns must be changed, such as positive female role models in the media The introduction of legislation to combat gender discrimination, such as the Equal Pay Act LFs argue that the feminisation of education and the economy provides evidence that women's opportunities are improving	Capitalism must be overthrown for women to be free from oppression and patriarchy. It is the main cause of women's oppression Barrett argues that the ideology of ' familism ' must also be overthrown. This promotes the idea to women that they should accept and be satisfied with their role as housewife-mother within the nuclear family	Revolutionary change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation Some RFs argue that women must live separately from men in order to break free from the threat of male violence and sexual aggression Political lesbianism Other RFs argue that lesbianism is the only way in which women can escape male oppression in personal and sexual relationships
Strengths	LFs are arguably correct to argue that changes in gender socialisation and legislation have led to a decrease in gender inequality	MFs are right to draw attention to the impact of capitalism on gender inequality. As well as the pay gap, males dominate the top positions in the economy	RF has demonstrated how female oppression occurs in the private sphere of the domestic and sexual relationships
Weaknesses	MF and RF would argue that LF exaggerates the progress made and ignores the continuing influence of capitalism and patriarchy on gender inequality. The Equal Pay Act has not led to equal pay for women	Not all women are part of a reserve army of labour and this theory also fails to explain why some jobs are dominated by women or why women end up being responsible for domestic labour. MF fails to explain gender inequality in non-capitalist societies	RF has been criticised for being too extreme, e.g. in seeing all men as the enemy. Its solutions of separation and political lesbianism are unrealistic. MF argues that it is class and not patriarchy that is the real cause of women's oppression

- **Difference feminists** would argue that theories such as liberal feminism which argue that patriarchy is universal are failing to acknowledge that women are not a homogeneous group. The experiences of women will be influenced by a range of factors such as social class, ethnicity, religion, age.
- **Black feminists** agree and argue that forms of feminism that strive to overcome patriarchy and class oppression but ignore ethnicity can discriminate against women through racial bias.
- **Postmodern feminists** also agree that previous feminist theories fail to reflect the diversity of the experiences of women and that terms such as patriarchy do not affect all women in the same way. Like all modern theorists, postmodernists regard feminism as a metanarrative.

Exam tip

If you are asked to evaluate the usefulness of feminist theories in understanding society, be prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of feminism. When evaluating feminist theories you should also refer to how they relate to other sociological theories, e.g. the agreement between Marxism and Marxist feminists.

■ Modernity and postmodernism

- The industrial revolution which led to urbanisation, capitalism and the development of nation-states led to the start of modernity, or modern society. **Modern theories** such as Marxism, functionalism and positivism were part of the **Enlightenment project** — the belief that knowledge and rational, scientific thinking could lead to progress in society. For example, positivist sociology rejected traditional sources of knowledge such as religion and argued that a scientific approach was needed to explain how the modern world worked and could be improved.
- **Postmodernists** argue, however, that the rapid social and economic changes that occurred in the later part of the twentieth century (from around the late 1970s) have led to the end of the modern era. Significant aspects of a postmodern society, often based on globalisation, include:
 - 1 a shift from **Fordist** mass production to a **post-Fordist** economy based on the service sector, technology and the need for a flexible workforce
 - 2 the decline of traditional sources of identity, particularly social class. These have been replaced by the consumption of consumer goods, notably global brands such as Nike and Apple
 - 3 life in a media-saturated society where popular culture shapes personal identity through satellite TV and, increasingly, the internet and mobile phones
- Postmodernist **Lyotard** (1984) argues that contemporary society cannot be explained by metanarratives, such as Marxism and functionalism, as it is based on isolated individuals who are linked by a few social bonds, rather than being controlled by structural factors.
- **Baudrillard** (1983) agreed that individuals were largely isolated and argued that the increasing consumption of the media to experience the world has led to the **'death of the social'**. He also argued that we consume commodities as a sign or way of expressing ourselves rather than for the function that they perform. He developed the idea of **simulacra**, meaning that media images that are not based on reality, such as 'celebrities', are increasingly used to model our behaviour. The media also create a world of **hyperreality**, where people cannot distinguish image from reality — e.g. the belief that 'celebrities' such as Keith Lemon are real.
- Rather than society moving to a new set of economic and social circumstances as postmodernists argue, **late modernists** see the rapid social changes that have recently occurred as a continuation of modern society. Late-modernist theorists such as **Giddens** (1984) and **Beck** (1992) agree with postmodernists that factors such as increasing individualism and globalisation are causing new problems for

Exam tip

As well as the methodological approach used by feminists, be prepared to link topic areas to a question on feminism, such as improvement in educational achievement to support the liberal feminist view or the use of 'sex to sell' in gender portrayal in the media to support the Marxist feminist arguments.

Exam tip

Be prepared to compare Giddens' use of reflexivity with social action theory. Giddens develops the symbolic interactionist notion of taking the role of the other as, through reflexivity, individuals are able to see themselves as others see them and create their own identity. Ethnomethodologists argue that reflexivity is not just used to shape our own identities but is used to make sense of reality and social order itself.

Exam tip

In evaluating the postmodern and late-modern views, be prepared to discuss the views of Harvey and the Marxist version of how capitalism has developed after the modern era (see the Neo-Marxism section).

Knowledge check 17

Outline two strengths of postmodern theory.

society. However, they share the view of the Enlightenment project that these problems can be addressed and that reason can be used to improve society.

- Part of Giddens' **structuration theory** (see the section on social action theory) was that there is a **duality of structure**; that people (or 'agents' as Giddens refers to them) could 'make' society as well as being influenced by it. He argues that people engage in **reflexivity**, whereby they constantly monitor their own situation in the light of information and seek change if needed.
- Beck agrees with Giddens and argues that the complex changes of the late-modern period, such as global warming and an unstable economy, have led to what he calls a **risk society**. He argues that individuals are more aware of these ever-increasing risks and use reflexivity to take action to reduce them. This can range from joining political movements such as the 'War on Poverty' to improving lifestyles by changing eating habits.

Evaluation

- + Late modernists and postmodernists are right to draw attention to the inadequacies of modern theories in explaining recent changes in society, such as the impact of factors such as globalisation.
- + Postmodernists are right to argue that there is greater diversity and choice in society and that people are able to 'pick and mix' their own identity via the media and the consumption of cultural products.
- **Modern theories** would argue that the ability to make these choices and consume is dependent on factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity.
- **Conflict theories** criticise postmodernists for ignoring the significance of structural factors and how gender and class shape people's life chances and identity.
- **Social action theory** argues that postmodernism ignores interactions between individuals and that people are active and able to distinguish between fiction and reality.
- Postmodernism is critical of sociological theories for not offering the 'truth' — but why should we accept their view of society as accurate?
- Beck has been criticised for ignoring the fact that risks faced may be influenced by factors such as social class and that some individuals may not have the power to be able to use reflexivity to reduce these risks.
- Postmodernists reject the view of late modernists that the 'risks' of society can be reduced by reflexivity.

■ The relationship between sociological theory and methods

Figure 1, on page 42, provides an overview of the relationship between theory and methods. Refer to *Student Guide 1 for sociological research methods* (pages 27–40).