

Theory and Methods Checklist

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Methods

Method	Practical Strengths/Weaknesses	Ethical Strengths/Weakness	Theoretical Strengths/Weaknesses
Lab Experiments			
Field/Natural Experiments			
Structured Interviews			
Unstructured Interviews			
Semi Structured Interviews			
Group Interviews			
Self Completion Questionnaires			
Written Questionnaires			
Mailed Questionnaires			
Case Studies			

Methods

Method	Practical Strengths/Weaknesses	Ethical Strengths/Weakness	Theoretical Strengths/Weaknesses
Official Statistics			
Personal and Historical Documents			
Comparative Method			

Sampling Techniques	Pilot Study	Reliability	Validity	Hawthorne Effect	Status Differences
Primary Data	Secondary Data	Quantitative	Qualitative	Positivism	Interpretivism
Informed Consent	Deception	Social Sensitivity	Protection From Harm	Right to Withdraw	Confidentiality
Anonymity	Funding sources	Researcher Characteristics	Hawthorne Effect	Impression Management	Representativeness
Generalise	Access to Participants	Gatekeeper	Practical issues	Ethical Issues	Theoretical Issues
Response Rate	Objective	Subjective	Researcher bias	Scientific Method	Research Design

Theory

Topic	Applied to areas (AO2)	Analysis	Evaluations
<p>Consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functionalism - New Right - Marxism – Structural and Humanistic - Feminism – Radical, Liberal, Marxist <p>Marx, Gramsci, Althusser, Durkheim, Parsons, Merton</p> <p>the main types of action theory, such as social action theory symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology.</p> <p>Weber, Mead, Blumer, Becker, Goffman, Garfinkel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stand alone question usually 10 or 20 marker - Evaluate the contribution of... to our understanding of society - Evaluate the view that conflict theories are better than consensus theories for explaining social issues in contemporary society - Evaluate the view that social action theories offer a better explanation of society today 	<p>Explain the impacts of theories using examples applied from throughout the specification – e.g. what have functionalists contributed to society – an understanding of family, education, crime etc.</p> <p>Also look to use different branches of the approaches to analyse and criticise one another – e.g. Merton criticises Durkheim and Parsons</p>	<p>What is wrong with these ideas?</p> <p>What would other sociologists suggest?</p> <p>What do they not explain?</p> <p>How are they backed up/criticised by research?</p> <p>Are they still relevant to contemporary society?</p>

Theory

Topic	Applied to areas (AO2)	Analysis	Evaluations
<p>The concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- modernity and postmodernity, including variants such as late modernity.- Modernist and postmodernist theories of contemporary society <p>Key Studies Baudrillard, Giddens, Beck, Harvey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Are we living in a post-modern age?- What type of methods are best for use in a post-modern age?- Debate questions – Modernity vs Post Modernity vs High Modernity	<p>Explain how features of modernity or post modernity are present in contemporary society by using examples from throughout the course – e.g. globalisation is POMO as is family diversity</p>	<p>What is wrong with these ideas?</p> <p>What would other sociologists suggest?</p> <p>What do they not explain?</p>
<p>The nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Debates about the scientific status of sociology: positivist and interpretivist views- Different views of the natural sciences, e.g. Popper, Kuhn, realism, and implications for sociology's scientific status <p>Key Studies Durkheim, Weber, Glaser & Strauss, Atkinson, Popper, Kuhn, Keat and Urry</p>	<p>Evaluate the claim sociology is not a science</p> <p>Outline and explain two ways sociology could be argued to be a science</p>	<p>Key debate – model answer provided on VLE/Handout</p> <p>Have to explain why sociology can be and why it can't be a science.</p>	<p>How are they backed up/criticised by research?</p> <p>Are they still relevant to contemporary society?</p>

Theory

Topic	Applied to areas (AO2)	Analysis	Evaluations
<p>The relationship between theory and methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- theoretical perspective and preference for particular research methods and sources of data- Positivism and quantitative data, Interpretivism and qualitative data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Evaluate the view that positivism is limited in investigating contemporary society- Evaluate the view that a sociologists own theoretical viewpoint influences their choice of methods	<p>Explain why one type of methodology is better than the other. Use examples of specific pieces of research that have been conducted in order to fully develop points. E.g. Positivist methods such as Official Stats often do not give us an insight into why something is happening – e.g. league tables tell us a school is performing well, but not why?</p>	<p>What is wrong with these ideas?</p> <p>What would other sociologists suggest?</p> <p>What do they not explain?</p>
<p>Key Studies: Durkheim (Suicide), Douglas, Atkinson, Taylor</p> <p>Debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, value freedom and ideology.- Different views of whether sociology can and should be objective or value free, e.g. classical sociology, value neutrality and committed sociology; relativism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 10 or 20 mark questions- Outline and explain two ways in which sociologist can remain objective in their research- Evaluate the claim that objectivity is impossible when studying society	<p>Objectivity vs Subjectivity – debate about whether sociologists can actually remain objective due to their own personal bias even if they use scientific methods. Some suggest objectivity is impossible, whilst other suggest that sources of funding and the methods chosen can influence objectivity</p>	<p>How are they backed up/criticised by research?</p> <p>Are they still relevant to contemporary society?</p> <p>Is there a middle ground? (Triangulation, Realist approaches)</p>
<p>Key Studies: Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Weber, Becker, Gouldner</p>			

Theory

Topic	Applied to areas (AO2)	Analysis	Evaluations
<p>The relationship between Sociology and social policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The difference between social problems and sociological problems; perspectives on social policy and on the role of sociology in relation to policy. <p>Key Studies: Worsley, Comte, Durkheim, Marx, Murray</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 and 20 mark questions - Outline 2 reasons sociological research might be ignored by government - Outline 2 reason why sociologist would suggest sociology should not inform social policy - Evaluate the claim that sociologist should not inform social policy 	<p>Explain, using examples, reasons for and against the use of sociological research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What influences research? - Why might governments not use sociological research? - Why might sociologists not trust governments? - Why might findings from sociological research not be turned into policy? - Why should sociology inform policy? 	<p>What is wrong with these ideas?</p> <p>What would other sociologists suggest?</p> <p>What do they not explain?</p> <p>How are they backed up/criticised by research?</p> <p>Are they still relevant to contemporary society?</p>