



Top 5 ...

Positivism:

Positivist approaches prefer **more scientific** reasoning when conducting research and prefer using methods that are **large scale** such as questionnaires, that can be **generalised** to the population as a whole. They prefer **causal relationships that predict human behaviour**. Their methods tend to be higher in **reliability** but often lack validity. Methods used include: **Structured interviews, experiments (field and lab) and statistics**

Interpretivism:

Interpretivists look to achieve understanding of the human condition in their research. They look for insight (**verstehen**) into the lives of those they are studying. As a result their research tends to be **smaller scale** as it is usually more time-consuming and **difficult to quantify**. Methods used include: **Personal and Historical Documents, Observations, unstructured interviews**

Quantitative Data:

Data presented in **numerical form** which is relatively easy to compare and quantify into tables and graphs. **Large scale data** like this is useful for governments to have an overview of problems, but can lead to misrepresentations, such as ethnic rates of offending. **Statistics, coded questionnaires, some non-participant observations and structured interviews** most likely to have this data.

Qualitative Data: This data is more **contextual** and requires more skill to interpret and find meanings. It shows a broader range of meanings and focuses more of the **individual's interpretation of events** than outsiders. It is used for smaller groups and individuals and less likely to be applied to social policy. Methods include: **unstructured interviews, case studies, participant observations and reviewing historical and personal documents**

Reliability and Validity:

Reliability in sociology refers to the ability for the research to be carried out again and similar results achieved. This is more likely to be a feature of **positivists using quantitative data**. **Validity** on the other hand is whether the research is measuring what it is supposed to measure. Is it a true picture of our understanding. Preferred by **interpretivists**, most likely to be found in **qualitative data**. Both can be improved through **triangulation or methodological pluralism**, merging two or more methods together to get a final result.

Theoretical considerations when conducting research