Research Methods knowledge Organiser

Postal / Email Questionnaires:
- ✓ Quick
- ✓ Easy to send to lots of people (representative & reliable).
- x Response rate is about 10%
- x Might not understand the questions (less valid).

Structured/ Semi-structured Interviews:
- ✓ All participants are asked the same questions (reliable)
- ✓ Can explain what questions mean (valid);
- ✓ Ability to explain answers further in a semi-structured interview (valid).
- x Interviewer bias

Informal (Unstructured) Interviews:
- ✓ Participants can talk about what is important to them (valid)
- ✓ The researcher can ask the participant what their answers mean (valid).
- x Every interview is different, hard to compare the results of all the interviews (less reliable)

Group interviews
- ✓ Access a wide range of views and experiences
- ✓ Participants may feel more at ease.
- ✓ Save time and money
- x Some may dominate discussion/everyone might not be heard
- x Cannot assure confidentiality

Participant observation
- ✓ Watch how participants behave (valid)
- ✓ Can see the world from participants' point of view (valid).
- x If participants know they are being observed, then they will not act naturally
- x The researcher might have to get involved in criminal behaviour (unethical)
- x If participants do not know they are being observed, then they can not give their permission (consent – unethical).

Official Statistics
- ✓ The data is usually based on the whole population (representative).
- ✓ May be the only source of data
- ✓ Can investigate trends over time
- x Cannot check the validity
- x Could be politically biased

Qualitative Data: data presented in words or visual form e.g. diary, photographs, mass media

Quantitative Data: data presented in numerical form presented in graphs, pie charts or tables of statistics e.g. official statistics

Primary Research (data collected first hand.)
- ✓ Reliable
- ✓ Relevant
- ✓ Scientific
- ✓ Preferred by Positivists
- X Costly
- X Time consuming
- X Sampling needs to be generalisable

Interviews
Surveys
Experiments
Questionnaires
Focus groups
Case Studies
Observations

Secondary Research (data from previously published sources.)
- ✓ Large Scale
- ✓ Cheap
- ✓ Quick
- ✓ Only way to study historical issues
- ✓ Preferred by Interpretivists
- X Reliability could be questioned
- X Interpretation issues

Census
Website
Journals
Media
Books
Official statistics
Primary data
ANYTHING

Validity: Data is valid if it gives a true picture of social reality

Reliability: Data is seen as reliable if other researchers using the same methods get the same results.

Representativeness: Sociologists want the sample they are studying to represent a large group of people

Evaluating research

Ethics: Research must be carried out in a morally acceptable way

Generalisation: Assuming the results are valid, reliable and representative you should be able to generalise your findings

Closed (or fixed-choice) questions	✓ Easy to process and present x Doesn't allow for the respondent to expand on their answer
Open-ended questions	✓ Able to give a more detailed answer x Difficult to convert into statistics x More time consuming to process

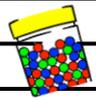**A representative sample:** typical of the wider population

An unrepresentative sample: difficult to generalise. Some Groups are overrepresented

Sampling Methods

Probability (or random) sampling			Non-probability sampling		
Simple random sampling	**Systematic random sampling**	**Stratified random sampling**	**Snowball sampling**	**Quota sampling**	**Purposive sampling**
Use a computer to generate a random sample, everyone has as much chance as the other.	The researcher uses a system to pick the participants (eg. every 10th name on the register).	This involves picking people from different groups within the population	The researcher selects one person, then asks them to put them in touch with other people, etc.	Each interviewer has an exact number of people from categories that they need e.g. females, teenagers.	The sample is collected according to a known characteristic e.g. a teacher.

Families Knowledge Organiser

Household: Consists of one person who lives alone or a group of people living at the same address.

Reasons for increase in one-person households:
- Remain single and childless
- Divorced
- International migrants
- Living alone through choice
- Cohabiting (potentially before marriage)
- Choosing to live apart from partner.

Functionalist

The family is a key social structure as it performs several essential functions for individuals and society. Murdock (1949) argues four vital functions:
1. Sexual Function: regulates sexual behaviour that is approved by society.
2. Reproductive function: New family members- procreation & childrearing.
3. Economic function: providing shelter, food & clothes. Economic cooperation between husband & wife.
4. Educational function: primary socialisation and discipling.

Segregated conjugal roles: Clear division of tasks divided into male and female tasks. Husband & wife spend little time together.

Joint conjugal roles: Do not have a rigid division of household tasks. Husband & wife spend time together.

How have families changed?:
- Smaller (less children)
- Marriage is less likely
- Parents are older
- Joint Conjugal roles
- Family diversity
- Increase in divorce, rise in reconstituted.

Why have families changed?:
- Laws (gay rights, divorce is easier.)
- Rise of feminism
- Diversity
- Technology (contraception, fertility)
- Changing norms & values
- Secularisation- religion is less of an influence.

Marxist

The family is one of the key institutions that social inequalities are passed on through the generations.
- The bourgeoise pass on their wealth to family members
- Educational advantages are passed down as people from wealthy backgrounds can afford to send their children to private schools
- Through the socialisation process people learn to accept their position.

Families used to rely on children's income until the **Education Act** of 1918 and childhood began

Parents are now less **authoritarian**
Children are seen as important members of the family and their opinions are listened to.

Parent & child relationship change

Boomerang children: Young people who leave home (for university or travelling) & return to living with their parent(s)

Contemporary social issues:
- The quality of parenting
- Relationships between teenagers & adults
- Care of the elderly.

Feminist

Families have a negative impact on the lives of women. Families socially construct gender differences- canalisation. Children also learn gender expectations through the division of domestic labour e.g. Mum cleaning up.

Patterns of marriage:
- Decline
- Later in life
- Civil partnership/same-sex
- Increase in cohabitation
- Increase in births outside of marriage

Patterns of divorce:
- Changes in the law
- Changing social attitudes & values
- Impact of secularisation
- Changes in the status of women
- Influence of media.

Consequences of divorce:
- Emotional distress
- Financial hardship
- Remarriage

keythinkers

Rapoport and Rapoport (1982)- Family Diversity	Young & Wilmott (1973) (Functionalist)	Talcott Parsons (1956) (Functionalist)	Eli Zaretsky (1976)- (Marxist)	Delphy & Leonard (Radical Feminists)	Ann Oakley (1974) (Feminist)
The family is going through a process of change. There is a wider range of options available & people value choice in their family pattern. No one dominant norm anymore. Five types of family diversity: Organisational, cultural, class, life course and cohort.	Suggested the 'Symmetrical family ' is typical-similar contributions made by each spouse to the running of the household e.g. shared chores and shared decisions. Conjugal roles are not interchangeable, but they are of equal importance.	The family has lost some of its functions, such as education. The family is almost functionless, but still has two important functions. Primary socialisation and the stabilisation of adult personalities e.g. to give and receive emotional support.	He believes that the family has become a prop to the capitalist economy (eg the system depends on the domestic labour of housewives who reproduce future generations of workers) whilst also serving as a vital unit of consumption.	Men are the prime beneficiaries of the exploitation of women's labour. They believe that the family has a central role in maintaining patriarchy. When wives have paid employment outside the home they still have to carry out household tasks which are not equally shared with their male partners.	Rejects the symmetrical family. The conventional family is no longer the norm. People expect a conventional family life to bring happiness, but there are strains e.g. depression, health problems, stress, from the conventional expectations.

GCSE Sociology Knowledge Organiser
Sociological approaches and methods

Key introductory terms

Sociology	The study of society. Sociologists look at a range of factors in someone's social world.
Society	A social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and has the same political authority and expectations.
Culture	The whole way of life of a group of people in society e.g. clothes, food, music.
Norms	These define appropriate and expected behaviour in different certain settings e.g. classroom, cinema, restaurant.
Values	Ideas and beliefs that people have about what is desirable and worth striving for e.g. privacy & respect
Socialisation	Learning the norms and values of your culture and society.
Primary socialisation	This takes place in early childhood and is where we learn basic behaviours and skills we need. Family are responsible.
Secondary socialisation	This takes place in later childhood and beyond, learn norms, values and culture. Agencies include education and media.
Nature	The idea that behaviour and characteristics are innate (we are born with them) and due to biology.
Nurture	The idea that behaviour and characteristics are learnt from our environment (sociologists believe this)
Social structures	These form society's framework and set limits and guide behaviour e.g. family, class.
Social processes	The ways that humans are affected by their interactions with others in society e.g. racism.
Social issues	These form society's framework and set limits and guide behaviour e.g. family, class.
Status	A person's social standing or position in society. This can be affected by gender, age, class etc.

Functionalist approach

Key sociologist: Durkheim
✳Society is positive and is in harmony
✳There is value consensus – everyone agrees on what is important
✳Society is like a human body, we need all parts of it to be able to function
✳Agencies such as family, education and crime all help to keep society running smoothly and these are positive
✳No group in society has more power than another group
But… Functionalists are accused of viewing society too positively.

Marxist approach

Key sociologist: Karl Marx
✳Society is negative and is based on conflict
✳Capitalism creates a divide between two social classes
✳The ruling class (bourgeoisie) own the businesses and exploit the working class (proletariat) for profit
✳Family, education, crime etc. all work to keep the class divide and benefit the ruling class
✳The working class do not realise they are being exploited
✳The only way to overcome this inequality is a revolution (and society becoming communist)

Feminist approach

✳Society is negative and is based on conflict
✳Society is divided by gender and is based on patriarchy (male domination and power)
✳Men have power and dominance in society and women are oppressed
✳Family, education, crime etc. all work to keep the gender divide and exploit women
✳For example, women may be victims of domestic abuse and may be taught gender roles that limit their opportunities in society

Weber's approach

✳People's ideas, values and skills have more of an influence on their position in society than class and money
✳Status (someone's social position) is not always linked to their class/money
✳E.g. some people have high status but do not have a lot of money (junior doctors) whereas some people may have low status but lots of money (lottery winners)

Interactionist approach

✳Society does not influence everyone in the same way
✳Everyone's experiences are different, you can't generalise about behaviour
✳People can be labelled as something (e.g. clever, naughty) which can affect how they see themselves
✳People might accept and live up to the label through a self-fulfilling prophecy

New Right approach

✳Society should be based on traditional values such as marriage
✳People should not be reliant on welfare benefits as this can create an underclass
✳Nuclear families are the best type (with a married mum and dad) and lone-parent families can cause issues

Consensus vs. conflict theories

Consensus theories
✳These theories believe society is based on consensus (agreement) and is in harmony
✳Everyone shares the same norms and values and no one group has more power than another
✳E.g. functionalism
Conflict theories
✳These theories believe society is based on conflict (disagreement) and is divided
✳People in society have different norms/beliefs/values
✳Some groups have more power than others
✳E.g. feminism, Marxism

Key methods terms

Aim	A general statement about what a sociologist expects to find out in research
Hypothesis	A prediction about what the sociologist expects they will find in research
Pilot study	A small test-run of a study which is carried out before the main study to check for any problems (e.g. equipment)
Sampling	How participants are chosen to take part in a study (e.g. volunteer, opportunity)
Primary data	Data which is collected first hand by the researchers (e.g. using a questionnaire or interview)
Secondary data	Data that already exists and is used by the researcher (e.g. official statistics, letters)
Quantitative data	Data which IS in the form of numbers
Qualitative data	Data which is NOT in the form of numbers and tends to be visual or in letters (e.g. diaries, photographs)
Validity	The accuracy of the findings – how truthful the data is.
Reliability	How consistent the findings are. If we repeated the study, would we find the same results?

Sampling methods

Random – all participants have an equal chance of being chosen (e.g. names out of hat)
✓Less biased and likely to be more representative
✗May not be fully representative – could choose all males
Volunteer – participants choose/self-select to take part (e.g. responding to an advert)
✓Easy to gain a sample, less likely to drop out
✗May not be representative – only certain people will agree
Opportunity – participants who are available are chosen
✓Easy to gain a sample   ✗ may not be representative
Stratified– participants chosen according to % in the population
✓Most representative   ✗ difficult for the researcher to do

Primary research methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Questionnaires	✓Participants are likely to be honest as anonymous ✓Can be given to a large sample so more representative	✗Participants may not understand the questions ✗May not be honest as want to appear desirable
Structured interviews (set questions)	✓Can compare responses easily between participants ✓Less likely to be biased as set questions	✗May not get full detail or gain a deep understanding ✗Cannot ask additional questions
Unstructured interviews (no set questions)	✓Can get full detail and a deep understanding ✓You can build rapport/relationship so may be more honest	✗May not get full detail or gain a deep understanding ✗Cannot ask additional questions
Group interviews	✓Can gain a variety of opinions ✓May be more honest as have group support	✗Some participants might take over the interview ✗Participants might be embarrassed to be honest
Participant observation (researcher joins group)	✓ May understand behaviour more as joining in ✓Can ask questions to help with research	✗Could be biased as too involved ✗Difficult to note behaviour so may not be accurate
Non-participant observation (watches from a distance)	✓ Less likely to be biased as not involved ✓ Easier to note behaviour so more likely to be accurate	✗May not get full understanding of behaviour as not involved in the group
Longitudinal study (follows a group over time)	✓Can look at the influence of different factors over time ✓Can gain detailed information of the group you study	✗Participants may drop out of the study ✗Sample is likely to be small so not representative

Secondary sources of data

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Official statistics (quantitative)	✓Often large sample sizes – more representative ✓Easy to analyse and compare over time as quantitative ✓ Likely to be accurate as collected by the government	✗May not give reasons for behaviour (just trends) ✗May not include all behaviours e.g. crime statistics may ignore the dark figure
Documents (qualitative) e.g. letters, diaries, school reports	✓Lots of detailed data as qualitative ✓Can find reasons behind behaviour	✗May be small sample sizes and not representative ✗May be time-consuming to analyse ✗Could be biased and not valid

Triangulation and mixed methods

Where a sociologist uses more than one method to find out lots of information about a topic e.g. using a questionnaire, interview and observation.
Is used to:
Gain more data on a topic
Check the validity/accuracy of the data
✗But, the data may be difficult compare as it is collected using different methods.