

POSITIVISTS

1	SOCIETY CAN BE MEASURED OBJECTIVELY
2	PREFER QUANTITATIVE METHODS
3	Society exerts influence over it's members- shapes their behaviour
4	By analysing quantitative data, positivists seek objective and scientific laws of cause and effect that determine behaviour
5	Positivists prefer questionnaires, structured interviews, experiments and official statistics. They produce reliable and representative data

INTERPRETIVISTS

1	SOCIETY CANNOT BE MEASURED OBJECTIVELY
2	PREFER QUALITATIVE METHODS
3	The individual constructs their own reality
4	By interpreting qualitative data, interpretivists seek to gain a subjective understanding of actors' meanings and life worlds.
5	Interpretivists prefer participant observation, unstructured interviews and personal documents. These produce valid data.

Quantitative data

1	Definition	Information in numerical form eg official statistics
2	Examples	Official statistics, questionnaires, structured interviews
3	Strength	Can spot trends and compare data sets over time.
4	Weakness	does not provide an insight into people's views.

Qualitative data

1	Definition	Description of people's feelings and experiences. Provides rich descriptions of people's lives- an insight.
2	Examples	Unstructured Interviews, Observations, Documents
3	Strength	Provides a rich insight into a person's views or feelings.
4	Weakness	Hard to compare and analysis can be time consuming

Primary Data

1	Definition	Collected by sociologists themselves and for their own purposes .It may be used to test a hypothesis (untested theory)
2	Examples	Questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments
3	Strength	Can gather data to test a specific hypothesis
4	Weakness	costly and time consuming

Secondary Data

1	Definition	Information collected or created by someone else for their own purposes but which the sociologist can then use
2	Examples	Documents, official statistics
3	Strength	cheap and readily available
4	Weakness	May not provide information required to test your own hypotheses.

Triangulation

1	Where both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to counteract the limitations of each method.
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Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13

POSITIVISTS

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INTERPRETIVISTS

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Primary Data

1	Definition	
2	Examples	
3	Strength	
4	Weakness	

Secondary Data

1	Definition	
2	Examples	
3	Strength	
4	Weakness	

Quantitative data

1	Definition	
2	Examples	
3	Strength	
4	Weakness	

Qualitative data

1	Definition	
2	Examples	
3	Strength	
4	Weakness	

Triangulation

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Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13

PERVERT –becomes **PET** in evaluation –(T = Reliability, Representativeness, Validity

Factors affecting choice of Method: Practical

1	Time and Money	Some methods require more time to complete than others. This can affect how much money is needed eg RUTTER –Questionnaire in 12 schools or VENKATESH- Observation lasting 7 years
2	Funding body requirements	funding bodies eg ESRC may request that data is presented in a certain format eg statistical.
3	Personal skills	Do you have the right characteristics or personal skills for your chosen method? Eg Interviews require more rapport.
4	Subject matter:	Method needs to be appropriate for the group being studied eg questionnaire should not be used for prisoners who may have poor literacy
5	Research opportunity	If an unexpected opportunity arises it is not possible to use structured methods. Eg Patrick –Glasgow Gang Observed

Factors affecting choice of Method: Theoretical

1	Positivists vs Interpretivists	Positivists-prefer to use more reliable and representative quantitative methods. Interpretivists –prefer to use more valid qualitative methods allowing insight.
2	Reliability	A method that can be repeated and similar results are obtained. EG. Lab experiments can be repeated over time and obtain the same results.
3	Representativeness	whether the people we study are a typical cross-section of the group we are interested in. Large scale surveys have representative samples.
4	Validity	A valid method produces an accurate or genuine picture of what something is really like.

Factors Affecting choice of Method: Ethical Issues

1	Informed consent	Participants should have right to refuse, given facts, give consent before and during research
2	Confidentiality /Privacy	Protect identity,respect privacy,data confidential
3	Harm to Participants	Researchers should be aware of the effects of their research on participants eg. Police intervention, Harm to employment opportunities Social exclusion,Psychological damage
4	Vulnerable groups	Researchers need to take special care with participants who are vulnerable eg age, disability, physical and mental health
5	Covert Research	May occur in experiments and observations-should offer right to withdraw when deception is revealed

Factors affecting choice of topic

1	Theoretical perspective	You would choose a topic relevant to your theoretical perspective eg Feminist –gender issues , Marxist-class inequalities
2	Social change and values	When we see social change in society or a change of values , we see these topics as worthy of research eg green crime
3	Funding bodies	People who fund the research may also have a say in the choice of topic.eg Government may want to know how their policies are working
4	Practical factors	Some topics may be really difficult to study eg experiences of young people in North Korea

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PERVERT –becomes **PET** in evaluation –(T = Reliability, Representativeness, Validity

Factors affecting choice of Method: Practical

1	Time and Money	
2	Funding body requirements	
3	Personal skills	
4	Subject matter:	
5	Research opportunity	

Factors affecting choice of Method: Theoretical

1	Positivists vs Interpretivists	
2	Reliability	
3	Representativeness	
4	Validity	

Factors Affecting choice of Method: Ethical Issues

1	Informed consent	
2	Confidentiality /Privacy	
3	Harm to Participants	
4	Vulnerable groups	
5	Covert Research	

Factors affecting choice of topic

1	Theoretical perspective	
2	Social change and values	
3	Funding bodies	
4	Practical factors	

Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13

The Research Process

1	Developing research aims and hypotheses	Research aims set out what the researcher will study and provide a focus for the study A hypothesis is a hunch/informed guess- written as a statement to be tested. Will / will not be supported by study evidence.
2	Carrying out a pilot study	This is a small-scale trial run. Usually done to identify problems with design before time and money is spent on the research. If needed methods can be redesigned if problems are found.
3	Selecting a sample	A sample is a subgroup of the population under study
4	Collecting data	Sociologists use a range of primary/secondary methods that generate quantitative / qualitative data
5	Analysing data	Data involves interpreting or making sense of data gathered. Spot trends , patterns and make links back to aims of study/hypothesis.
6	Evaluating study's aims, methods, findings and conclusions	Sociologists write articles about their research in journals and books. They are reviewed by their peers and evaluated by other sociologists- this is known as peer review. You weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of findings and methods.

HYPOTHESES

1	Definition	This is a possible explanation that can be tested by collecting evidence to support it or prove it false. Discarding a hypothesis is a good thing! This just means we have learnt something new!
2	Advantages	Gives direction to our research.Gives focus to our questions. Positivists favour a hypothesis.They seek cause and effect relationships

AIMS

1	Definition	An aim is more general than a hypothesis. It will simply be there to collect data on a certain topic. Interpretivists favour a broad aim rather than a hypothesis-concerned with actors' meanings.
2	Advantages	More open-ended. Not tied to trying to prove a particular hypothesis. Useful at the start of research when we know very little.

OPERATIONALISATION

1	Definition	Process of turning a sociological concept or theory into something measurable. Eg. To measure a person's social class we might ask the question- "What is your job?"
2	Problems	When different sociologists operationalise the same concept differently eg- placing an occupation into two different categories.

PILOT STUDY

1	Definition	A small-scale trial run, usually of a social survey, conducted before the main study
2	Why do it?	to iron out any problems, clarify questions and their wording, allow researchers to practice their skills and make some changes before the main study takes place.

Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 2 KO for this lesson

The Research Process		
1	Developing research aims and hypotheses	
2	Carrying out a pilot study	
3	Selecting a sample	
4	Collecting data	
5	Analysing data	
6	Evaluating study's aims, methods, findings and conclusions	

HYPOTHESES		
1	Definition	
2	Advantages	
AIMS		
1	Definition	
2	Advantages	
OPERATIONALISATION		
1	Definition	
2	Problems	
PILOT STUDY		
1	Definition	
2	Why do it?	

Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 2 KO for this lesson

Sampling			TYPES of Sampling				
1	Sample	smaller subgroup drawn from the wider group that we are interested in.	Type		Explanation	Strengths	Limitations
			1	Random	Draw names out of a hat or a random number generator.	Avoids bias	Atypical Sample - unrepresentative
2	Sampling	process of selecting a sample	2	Systematic sampling	Every nth person is chosen. Eg. Young and Wilmott chose every 36 th person on an electoral register in their family study	Avoids bias	Atypical Sample - unrepresentative
			3	Stratified random sampling	Researcher breaks down the population in the sampling frame by age, ethnicity etc. The sample is then created in the same proportions.	Representative	Not always possible E.g. Homeless, hidden members of the population.
3	Why do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> want to ensure that those we study are typical of the research population or representative. (Favoured by Positivists) we can then make generalisations from our findings to the whole research population 	4	Quota	Same procedure as stratified random sample and then each researcher is given a quota to fill for each group eg males, females. They continue until this is filled.	Quick	May only get a sample of those willing to take part.
			5	Snowball	Making contact with a number of key people who then introduce others to the researcher. This continues until enough data has been gathered	Good for 'hidden groups' e.g. illegal activities – drug use, etc.	Sample size can be limited, small, not necessarily representative.
			6	Volunteer	This sampling relies on volunteers. The researcher will request volunteers through advertising in magazines etc.	You already have the consent of sample and they are willing to take part.	People who volunteer may have certain characteristics which make them unrepresentative. e.g. Retired or unemployed have more time to do this.
4	Sampling frame	list of all the members of the population we are interested in. Eg Electoral register, Pupils on roll in schools	7	Opportunity or Convenience sampling.	Choosing from individuals who are easiest to access. E.g. passers-by in the street or a captive audience such as a class of pupils.	They are quick and easy to find.	Not always representative.
5	Non-Representative samples Not all samples used are representative: Practical- may not know CAGE, no sampling frame OR Interpretivists- seek more valid data not general laws of behavior.						

Sampling		TYPES of Sampling			
		Type	Explanation	Strengths	Limitations
1	Sample	1	Random		
		2	Systematic sampling		
		3	Stratified random sampling		
2	Sampling	4	Quota		
		5	Snowball		
3	Why do it?				
4	Sampling frame	6	Volunteer		
		7	Opportunity or Convenience sampling.		
5	Non-Representative samples				

LAB EXPERIMENT		
1	Definition	A test carried out in controlled conditions and in an artificial setting to establish a cause and effect relationship between two or more variables
2	Independent variable (IV)	The factor that will be manipulated by the researcher eg. The amount of praise given by a teacher
3	Dependent Variable (DV)	The outcome of manipulating the IV eg. Pupil test scores (dependent on praise given by teacher)
4	Control Group	The group that will not be exposed to the variable under investigation. It will be identical to the experimental group in all other respects. This group provides a baseline against which changes in the experimental group can be compared.
5	Experimental group	The group that will be exposed to the variable under investigation. It will be identical to the control group in all other respects.

KEY STUDIES		STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS
1	MAYO: The Hawthorne Effect- Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company in 1925-measure the effect of various changes in working conditions on industrial output. Any changes made- even unfavourable had little effect on industrial output-workers were efficient because they knew they were being observed by Mayo.	1 ETHICAL: Some unethical research is justified eg Milgram study outcomes	1 PRACTICAL: Hard to identify and control all the variables Cannot be used to study past and so we are unable to control variables that were acting in the past. Requires training and costly.
2	MILGRAM: Electric shock experiment- interested in researching how far people would go in obeying an instruction if it involved harming another person. Participants were given the role of teacher and the confederate was given the role of learner. The teacher thought they were administering electric shocks for each incorrect answer given by the learner-this was not the case. The experimenter in the room would prod the teacher to continue with shocks up to 450v. 65% (two-thirds) of participants (i.e. teachers) continued to the highest level of 450 volts. All the participants continued to 300 volts.	2 RELIABILITY: Because procedures are standardised and researcher is detached, this is a very reliable method eg Milgram study repeated in other countries over time.	2 ETHICAL: Lack of informed consent-especially for vulnerable groups Harm to Participants eg Zimbardo Deception eg Milgram
		THEORETICAL	
3	ZIMBARDO: Stanford Prison Experiment- a mock prison was set up at Stanford Uni- students were either guards or prisoners. They adopted the uniforms of guards and prisoners. Each group of students adopted their roles- guards became more sadistic and prisoners felt the prison was real- there was no escape. Experiment had to end after only 6 days.	1 POSITIVISTS: Not reliable or representative enough to be favoured.	3 RELIABILITY: Researchers may not always follow the standardised procedures and so not always reliable.
		2 INTERPRETIVISTS: Lacks validity due to artificiality Ignores free will.	4 VALIDITY: The presence of the researcher can affect the outcomes eg Hawthorne Effect-Mayo. Artificial –not a reflection of social meanings
			5 REPRESENTATIVENESS: Sample is very small and so hard to make generalisations

LAB EXPERIMENT		
1	Definition	
2	Independent variable (IV)	
3	Dependent Variable (DV)	
4	Control Group	
5	Experimental group	

KEY STUDIES		STRENGTHS		LIMITATIONS	
1		1		1	
		2		2	
2		THEORETICAL		3	
		1		4	
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FIELD EXPERIMENT

1	Definition	A field experiment is carried out in a natural setting eg street or workplace. The people involved are generally unaware that they are part of an experiment. This reduces the Hawthorne Effect (don't change their behaviour because they are being watched) The researcher will manipulate one or more of the variables to see what effect this has on the participants.
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KEY STUDY

1	ROSENHAN-On being sane in insane places- sent mentally healthy confederates to psychiatric hospitals claiming they heard voices. They were all diagnosed with psychosis and only able to be released when they accepted the diagnosis/were compliant. *Also see Rosenthal and Jacobsen in the Education Unit
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STRENGTHS

1	VALIDITY Less artificial- naturalistic setting People unaware they are being watched-will behave naturally
2	PRACTICAL Don't need consent from the participants and don't need to use expensive equipment in all cases.
3	VALIDITY Less artificial-more valid
4	RELIABILITY Achieved reliability in some studies eg Rosenthal and Jacobsen-used a control group

LIMITATIONS

1	PRACTICAL- Gatekeepers can prevent an experiment from being conducted (e.g. the head teacher at a school). Can be time consuming . Can't control all of the variables.
2	ETHICAL- Potential for harm and consent issues- Rosenhan- the vulnerable patients were unaware of the experiment and the researchers may have experienced distress or unnecessary treatment.
3	REPRESENTATIVENESS- Hard to obtain a representative sample
4	RELIABILITY- Procedures may differ in different settings reducing reliability.

THEORETICAL

1	Positivists- lack of control in a field experiment means this is not favoured
2	Interpretivists- would welcome the natural setting but not generally favoured.

COMPARATIVE METHOD

1	Definition	Carried out in the mind of the sociologist- a thought experiment. Does not involve experimenting on real people. Designed to discover cause and effect relationships.
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KEY STUDY

1	DURKHEIM- Suicide- Used data on suicide , religion and marriage etc to identify social facts leading to suicide eg level of integration
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THEORETICAL

1	Positivists – approve- scientific method, objective
2	Interpretivists- do not favour- stats are social constructs

STRENGTHS

1	PRACTICAL- Data readily available Quick, Cheap
2	ETHICAL ISSUES- No people involved-no harm
3	RELIABILITY- Able to repeat and compare data over time

LIMITATIONS

1	VALIDITY- Correlations found not causes
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS May not represent all cases eg suicide recorded differently in different countries due to stigma

FIELD EXPERIMENT

1	Definition	
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KEY STUDY

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THEORETICAL

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COMPARATIVE METHOD

1	Definition	
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KEY STUDY

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THEORETICAL

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STRENGTHS

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STRENGTHS

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LIMITATIONS

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LIMITATIONS

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QUESTIONNAIRE TYPES

1	Face-to-face questionnaire	Administered directly by the researcher to the subject in person - this is the same as a structured interview
2	Self-completion questionnaire	Completed independently . Administered in bulk
3	E-questionnaire/postal	Administered online/by post

LIMITATIONS

1	PRACTICAL-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is superficial- questionnaires need to be brief to reduce chance of low-response rate Incentives can push up costs eg. Prize draws Postal- No guarantees that targeted person received the questionnaire or was the one who completed it. Inflexible-can't explore new ideas
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS -Low response rate;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May only be answered by those who have the time or those who can understand the questions Eg. Shere Hite's -only a 4.5% response rate from 100,000 questionnaires posted. Those who do reply are likely to be different from others- they may have strong views
3	VALIDITY:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snapshots of one moment in time- don't reflect how views change
4	DETACHMENT/OBJECTIVITY:	Interpretivists eg Cicourel- data from questionnaires lack validity because we don't get close to the subjects of our study. -Lying, forgetting and right answerism -Imposed meanings of the researcher

STRENGTHS

1	PRACTICAL-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quick and cheap. Can reach a large audience Eg: Connor and Dewson (2001) posted 4000 copies of their questionnaires to students in 14 HE institutions in a survey about working-class student decisions to go to university. Don't need special training Quantifiable Can test hypotheses
2	RELIABILITY-	More reliable as ; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily repeated and checked by other researchers-Same questions used and same choice of answers given Any differences in respondent's answers reflect real differences
3	DETACHMENT/OBJECTIVITY	Positivists favour them as the researcher is detached and so will not influence the respondent's answers
4	REPRESENTATIVENESS	Large scale-more generalizable data
5	ETHICAL ISSUES-	Few ethical issues

TYPES OF QUESTION

1	Open-ended question	Questions in a social survey that allow respondents to answer as they wish, in their own words. Harder to analyse as cannot be pre-coded.
2	Advantages	Qualitative data/Gain an insight/Find out the whys
3	Disadvantages	Can't compare /Unable to quantify/Longer answers
4	Closed-ended question	Questions in a social survey that allow only limited choice of answers from a pre-set list. answers are often pre-coded for ease of analysis.
5	Advantages	Quantitative data/Quick /comparable/reliable
6	Disadvantages	Restricted choice / force a simplistic response

THEORETICAL

1	Positivists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As they are reliable, generalisable and representative they would favour questionnaires. -standardised questions can be used again by other researchers- more reliable. -pre-coded questions allow us to produce quantitative data for analysis. -Questionnaires are large scale and more representative.
2	Interpretivists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reject questionnaires- they reflect the imposed meanings of the researcher. They produce little qualitative data – do not provide an insight into the experiences of others.Low in validity due to detachment.

QUESTIONNAIRE TYPES		
1	Face-to-face questionnaire	
2	Self-completion questionnaire	
3	E-questionnaire/postal	

TYPES OF QUESTION		STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS		
1	Open-ended question			1 PRACTICAL-	1 PRACTICAL-
2	Advantages				
3	Disadvantages				2 REPRESENTATIVENESS-Low response rate;
4	Closed-ended question				
5	Advantages				
6	Disadvantages			2 RELIABILITY-	
THEORETICAL		3 DETACHMENT/OBJECTIVITY	3 VALIDITY:		
		4 REPRESENTATIVENESS	4 DETACHMENT/OBJECTIVITY:		
		5 ETHICAL ISSUES-			
		1	Positivists		
		2	Interpretivists		

INTERVIEW TYPES

1	Structured interview	Structured interviews are the same as questionnaire interviews. The researcher will have a list of questions which need to be asked.
2	Unstructured interview	more like a conversation with the interviewer encouraging the respondent to give detailed answers and express views. Usually there are a list of topics/themes to cover.
3	Semi-structured interview	The interviewer will have an agenda that he/she will want to stick to and some pre-prepared questions, but will allow the respondent to elaborate on a response.
4	Group interview	involve a panel who will all contribute their views on an issue.
5	Focus Group	A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. They are interviewed as a group.

STRENGTHS OF STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

LIMITATIONS OF STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1	PRACTICAL- Training is easy and inexpensive- all they need to do is follow instructions. Quick-reach a large number of people Can gather quantitative data-suitable for hypothesis testing
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS- High response rate-People find it harder to turn people down face-to-face- some enjoy the opportunity to talk.EG. Young and Wilmott:Studied kinship networks in East London.They approached 987 people - only 54 refused.
3	RELIABILITY- Easy to repeat due to standardised question-more comparable
4	ETHICAL ISSUES- few ethical issues

1	PRACTICAL- More expensive than just posting out a questionnaire! Costs increase if researcher pursues non-reponses with call backs
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS- Those who take part may be untypical eg lonely. This reduces representativeness of the sample.
3	VALIDITY- Closed-ended questions with pre-set answers restrict the interviewee's responses. You are unable to explain questions and clarify misunderstandings. People may lie or exaggerate. The social interaction may influence answers given eg gender, ethnicity. Inflexible-researcher chooses possible responses Snapshots- lack meaning –don't allow for changes in opinion

THEORETICAL

1	POSITIVISTS-	Favour as they generate objective quantitative data. More reliable and representative too.
2	INTERPRETIVISTS-	Not as favoured as unstructured type- not as valid-need open questions to uncover meanings.

4	FEMINIST criticism: GRAHAM: They are patriarchal- researcher decides on the topic and choice of response, Women seen in isolation - rather than seeing them in the context of power relationships that oppress them.
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INTERVIEW TYPES

1	Structured interview	
2	Unstructured interview	
3	Semi-structured interview	
4	Group interview	
5	Focus Group	

STRENGTHS OF STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

LIMITATIONS OF STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

1	
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THEORETICAL

1	POSITIVISTS-	
2	INTERPRETIVISTS-	

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STRENGTHS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS		LIMITATIONS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	
1	<p>PRACTICAL/ETHICAL: RAPPORT and SENSITIVITY- Rapport is a relationship of trust and understanding. -can be gained in this less formal interview. Eg. Labov (73) Black children became less tongue-tied and opened up more easily to the researcher More flexible- new topics and hypotheses can be explored.</p>	1	<p>PRACTICAL- Take a long time to complete-leads to small sample too. Need to have the right training- high costs Need good interpersonal skills Unable to quantify/compare answers easily</p>
2	<p>ETHICAL ISSUES- Good for sensitive topics eg DOBASH and DOBASH- Violence against wives</p>	2	<p>REPRESENTATIVENESS- Fewer interviews and so a less representative sample-findings are less generalisable.</p>
3	<p>VALIDITY- No set questions- interviewee can speak at length- more valid EG. Dean and Taylor-Gooby (92) Used unstructured tape-recorded interviews, lasting up to 90 minutes, with 85 claimants. Can clarify meaning and check understanding.</p>	3	<p>RELIABILITY- Not standardised and so not reliable/replicable.</p>
		4	<p>VALIDITY- Interviewer effects and interviewer bias may mean that the responses are not a reflection of truth- there may be some leading by the interviewer and right answerism by the interviewee to give a more socially desirable response.</p>

THEORETICAL

1	<p>POSITIVISTS-</p>	<p>Don't favour them- less objective and less reliable and representative.</p>
2	<p>INTERPRETIVISTS-</p>	<p>Do favour them as they provide an insight –more valid.</p>

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	GROUP INTERVIEWS
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1	<p>STRENGTHS Can add questions and clarify meaning whilst allowing the interviewee to speak at length</p>	1	<p>STRENGTHS Useful for younger sample- may feel more comfortable talking with peers-increases response rate. Can clarify meaning and check understanding.</p>
2	<p>LIMITATIONS Not standardized- loss of comparability- not as easy to analyse the data or generate quantitative data throughout.</p>	2	<p>LIMITATIONS Not everyone may contribute-may only hear from the most literate or confident- leads to a lack of validity. Social desirability bias - may change answers to give a more socially acceptable response. Hard to quantify and compare data.</p>
<p>Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 2 KO for this lesson</p>			

STRENGTHS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS		LIMITATIONS OF UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	
1		1	
		2	
2		3	
		4	
3			

THEORETICAL		
1	POSITIVISTS-	
2	INTERPRETIVISTS-	

SEMI -STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS		GROUP INTERVIEWS	
1	STRENGTHS	1	STRENGTHS
2	LIMITATIONS		
		2	LIMITATIONS
Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 2 KO for this lesson			

TYPES of OBSERVATION			THEORETICAL	
1	Participant	when the researcher participates in the activities of those he or she is observing.	1	POSITIVISTS- Do not favour them-too subjective and small-scale. Also not reliable.
2	Non-Participant	is when the observer records events without taking part in them eg. An observation of how gender roles affect play.	2	INTERPRETIVISTS Favour them-gain an insight and provides rich and valid data. Great for hard-to-reach groups/under-researched topics.
3	Covert	Researcher does not inform participants of intent.	3	Marxists and Functionalists are critical though- tends to ignore wider structural forces eg class inequality or the power of socialisation.
4	Overt	Researcher is open about intent.		
CONDUCTING PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION			STRENGTHS of PO	
1	Getting In	-Making contact: POLSKY-used his pool skills, PATRICK – used an informal contact. -Observer’s role: WHYTE- became secretary-good vantage point for observations -Acceptance: eg JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN-Black like me-coloured his skin but THORNTON- too old for rave culture.	1	VALIDITY- -see what people actually do compared with what they might say they do -Insight-We can fully understand a situation by experiencing this for ourselves (“verstehen”)
2	Staying In	Need to stay detached to avoid going native or becoming biased. PUNCH-started to see the police he observed as colleagues	2	FLEXIBILITY- The researcher doesn't start with a fixed hypothesis-the research can take a new direction.
3	Getting out	There may be some danger and so need strategy for getting out- eg PATRICK-found violent gang too sickening. WHYTE found it hard going back to academic language. May hold back information which affects validity.	3	PRACTICAL- YOBLONSKY-Only way of studying hard to reach groups- a researcher may seem like an authority figure to a gang. Can build a rapport- seen in PATRICK-Glasgow gang study
4	Overt/ Covert	OVERT-Avoids ethical issues, allows the researcher to ask naive questions as an outsider without fear of being “found out”, observer can take notes more easily BUT the Hawthorne Effect can be an issue (MEAD) COVERT- can gain more validity-HUMPHREYS- Tearoom Trade- only way to study gay men’s sexual encounters. BUT there are risks, rely on memory, group dynamics may change and practical issues of getting access.	LIMITATIONS of PO	
			1	PRACTICAL- time (WHYTE 4yrs) , money, interpersonal skills, stressful
			2	ETHICAL - opportunities for deception, lack of consent, breaking confidentiality and harm -also participation in illegal activity.
			3	REPRESENTATIVENESS- group studied is usually quite small
4	RELIABILITY- hard to see how anyone could replicate such a unique study			
5	Ethical Issues	COVERT- DECEPTION is immoral. Lying and deserting the group at the end of the study is also unethical.Participation in or observation of illegal activities is unethical.	5	VALIDITY- bias and lack of objectivity criticized by the Positivists- risk of going native and defending groups or concealing data. The accounts given are too subjective.

TYPES of OBSERVATION			THEORETICAL		
1	Participant		1	POSITIVISTS-	
2	Non-Participant		2	INTERPRETIVISTS	
3	Covert		3	Marxists and Functionalists	
4	Overt				
CONDUCTING PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION			STRENGTHS of PO		
1	Getting In		1	VALIDITY-	
2	Staying In		2	FLEXIBILITY-	
3	Getting out		3	PRACTICAL-	
			LIMITATIONS of PO		
4	Overt/ Covert		1	PRACTICAL-	
			2	ETHICAL -	
5	Ethical Issues		3	REPRESENTATIVENESS-	
			4	RELIABILITY-	
			5	VALIDITY-	

STRENGTHS of NON- PO

1	PRACTICAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are fewer issues of getting in , staying in and getting out in a non-PO. The researcher can openly make notes. The researcher will not have to juggle playing a role as well as recording observations. They are generally cheaper and quicker to do that with participatory methods, because the researcher does not have to get to know the respondents.
2	ETHICAL There are fewer ethical issues involved in non-PO as people are more likely to know they are being observed and are more likely to have given their consent.
3	VALIDITY (Theoretical) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It allows for a more objective/unbiased view of what is occurring. There is a limited danger for non-participant observers "going native" and take on the values of those they are observing. It is easier for the researcher to blend into the background compared to participant observation, which should mean people act more naturally.
4	RELIABILITY (THEORETICAL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It should have better reliability than with participant observation because the researcher is less involved. If observations are structured and standardised, it is relatively easy to repeat and make comparisons.
5	REPRESENTATIVENESS A more structured version may be easily repeated on a larger scale and so will be more representative.

THEORETICAL

1	POSITIVISTS- Would prefer a structured non-PO although observation in itself is considered to be too subjective.
2	INTERPRETIVISTS Would favour this method- although covert observation of any kind would yield more valid results.

LIMITATIONS of NON-PO

1	PRACTICAL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It may be more difficult to gain access to a group to study if this is done overtly. Gatekeepers exist in schools and large organisations and hard to reach groups may reject the researcher.
2	ETHICAL There may still be ethical issues if a covert non-PO is conducted eg through the use of CCTV
3	VALIDITY (THEORETICAL) Verstehen can be better obtained through participant observation- non-participant observation is too detached.
4	REPRESENTATIVENESS The unstructured method is usually completed on a smaller scale and so is less representative

Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 1 KO for this lesson

STRENGTHS of NON- PO

1	PRACTICAL
2	ETHICAL
3	VALIDITY (Theoretical)
4	RELIABILITY (THEORETICAL)
5	REPRESENTATIVENESS

THEORETICAL

1	POSITIVISTS-	
2	INTERPRETIVISTS	

LIMITATIONS of NON-PO

1	PRACTICAL
2	ETHICAL
3	VALIDITY (THEORETICAL)
4	REPRESENTATIVENESS

Part of the Research Methods unit also see lessons on quantitative and qualitative methods Y12 and Theory and Methods Y13. Also see Part 1 KO for this lesson

Defining official statistics		Sources of Official Statistics	
1	Official statistics	These are quantitative data gathered by the government or other official bodies. Official statistics may be a by-product of someone's work eg. Unemployment figures or may be the result of research eg. British Social Attitudes Survey.	1 Registration from Government departments Department for Education, Home Office take information from tax office, social services, hospitals, police stations to be processed and published. Home office crime stats. Births, deaths..
STRENGTHS of OFFICIAL STATISTICS		2 Surveys The ONS compiles and analyses economic, social and population statistics. The ONS is responsible for the Census which takes place every 10 years (last one 2011) General Household survey and the New Earnings survey are other sources.	
1	PRACTICAL Free source of data. Allow for comparisons to be made.eg educational achievement. They show trends and patterns over time and so can show cause and effect relationships. Eg. We can compare divorce before changes in the law and after.	3 Hard statistics Eg. Birth rates and death rates –data very nearly includes all births and deaths. More valid and representative.	
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS They cover large numbers of the population Care is taken in sampling and so they are highly representative. They are good for hypothesis testing and for making generalisations.	4 Soft Statistics Crime statistics- from police recorded crime or the CSEW. Neither of these sources of data are comprehensive with many crimes not included in either. Less valid and representative.	
LIMITATIONS of OFFICIAL STATISTICS		1 PRACTICAL Government collects data for it's own purposes-there may be no data available for the sociologist's study of choice. Eg.Durkheim found there to be no data on the religion of those who committed suicide. The definitions that the state uses in collecting the data may be different from those that sociologists would use.Eg. They may define poverty differently. If definitions change over time you are unable to make comparisons eg League tables or unemployment figures	
3	RELIABILITY Generally seen as a reliable source of data. Compiled in a standardised way by trained staff following set procedures. Any person trained will record the data in the same way.	2 REPRESENTATIVENESS Some official surveys are less representative than others eg. CSEW (Crime Survey-victim survey)...only based on a sample of the relevant population.	
4	VALIDITY Hard Statistics are more valid	3 RELIABILITY Human error may occur- Census coders may make errors or omit information when recording data from census forms.	
THEORETICAL		4 VALIDITY Soft statistics are less valid	
1	POSITIVISTS-	See statistics as social facts.They are true and objective measures of reality. Eg Durkheim- Suicide study	
2	INTERPRETIVISTS	Statistics are social constructs-the outcome of labelling behaviours. Eg Atkinson- on suicide	
3	MARXISTS	Statistics are part of the ruling class ideology – part of the ideas and values that maintain the capitalist class in power. Eg unemployment statistics	

Defining official statistics		Sources of Official Statistics	
1	Official statistics	1	Registration from Government departments
STRENGTHS of OFFICIAL STATISTICS		2	Surveys
1	PRACTICAL	3	Hard statistics
2	REPRESENTATIVENESS	4	Soft Statistics
3	RELIABILITY	LIMITATIONS of OFFICIAL STATISTICS	
4	VALIDITY	1	PRACTICAL
THEORETICAL		2	REPRESENTATIVENESS
1	POSITIVISTS-	3	RELIABILITY
2	INTERPRETIVISTS	4	VALIDITY
3	MARXISTS		

Defining documents

1	Documents	These are usually secondary sources of qualitative data. They are produced by both organisations and individuals. There are a wide range of materials used here: letters, diaries, newspapers, photos, radio and film broadcasts.
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Types of Document

1	Personal	Created by individuals- provide a first-hand account of events and experiences. Eg letters, diaries
2	Public	Produced by organisations such as governments, agencies eg Acts of Parliament.
3	Historical	Personal or public documents created in the past. Eg. Parish records, Census

STRENGTHS of DOCUMENTS

1	PRACTICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -some are easily accessible with no great outlay of time or money - archives now digitise their artefacts and make them public online.
2	ETHICAL ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Personal documents present some ethical issues but other documents raise relatively few. -The documents already exist, they have been either published or otherwise made accessible, and sociologists can make use of them without consent.
3	RELIABILITY and CONTENT ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some researchers use content analysis. -Content analysis is a research method where the researcher attempts to codify or thematically analyse a written document. -This aims to provide a reliable interpretation of the qualitative data that are being analysed by creating quantitative data from it (e.g. the use of certain words or phrases in media reports). <p>STRENGTH of CONTENT ANALYSIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it can reveal patterns or trends which may not have been obvious before the research, or might have been considered an impression gained by a biased or subjective reading. -It is possible to apply a reliable, systematic method of analysis when approaching documents that can reveal useful information.

LIMITATIONS of DOCUMENTS

1	PRACTICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some media documents are online and need to be paid for which can affect access and costs. -While there are personal documents in accessible archives (whether online or in public libraries and archives) they are not necessarily representative, and they do not necessarily feature documents from the specific people sociologists wish to research. -Accessing personal documents that are not publically available can be challenging.
2	ETHICAL ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Personal documents such as letters were intended to be read by a particular individual; diaries might not have been intended to be read at all leading to issues of consent, privacy and confidentiality. -This might be less the case with diaries that were intended for publication (like those of some public figures) but that intention also potentially undermines their validity.
3	RELIABILITY and CONTENT ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -qualitative data -therefore more likely to prove valid rather than reliable. <p>LIMITATION of CONTENT ANALYSIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -it cannot reveal the reasons for certain patterns of content, or the meanings placed on it; it can merely describe it.

THEORETICAL

1	POSITIVISTS-	Do not favour them as a general rule- interpretation is open to subjectivity
2	INTERPRETIVISTS	They favour them as they give a rich insight- SCOTT also devised a means of quality control of documents to check validity- authenticity,

Defining documents		Types of Document	
1	Documents	1	Personal
STRENGTHS of DOCUMENTS		2	Public
1	PRACTICAL	3	Historical
2	ETHICAL ISSUES	LIMITATIONS of DOCUMENTS	
3	RELIABILITY and CONTENT ANALYSIS	1	PRACTICAL
	STRENGTHS of CONTENT ANALYSIS	2	ETHICAL ISSUES
THEORETICAL		3	RELIABILITY and CONTENT ANALYSIS
1	POSITIVISTS-	LIMITATION of CONTENT ANALYSIS	
2	INTERPRETIVISTS		