A-Level Theory and Methods

| **Specification and content** | **Covered ✓** | **RAG** | **RAG** |
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| * **1. Quantitative and qualitative methods of research; research design**
* **Sources of data, including questionnaires, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, experiments, documents and official statistics**
* **The distinction between primary and secondary data, and between quantitative and qualitative data**
* **The relationship between positivism, interpretivism and sociological methods; the nature of ‘social facts’**

**The theoretical, practical and ethical considerations influencing choice of topic, choice of method(s) and the conduct of research (AS and A Level)** |
| * **Types of research method and data sources:**
* the differences between quantitative and qualitative data,
* strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative data
* the differences between primary and secondary sources of data;
* strengths and limitations of primary and secondary sources of data;
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| * **Primary methods of data collection and the main variants of each :**
* Questionnaires
	+ Interviews (structured and unstructured)
	+ observation (participant and non-participant observation)
	+ experiments (laboratory and field experiments).
	+ The main stages of the research process for these methods.
	+ Practical, Ethical and theoretical strengths and weaknesses for each method
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| * **Secondary sources of data:**
* Documents (personal, public and historical; different sources of official statistics.)
* official statistics (including different sources)
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| **Research design, in relation to** * pilot studies and
* sampling techniques;
* main stages of the research process in relation to the methods.
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| * **Practical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,**
* time,
* cost,
* access and
* researcher’s characteristics;
* strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.
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| * **Ethical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,**
* informed consent,
* deceit and
* vulnerable groups;
* strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.
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| * **Theoretical issues affecting choice of methods and sources,**
* reliability,
* validity,
* representativeness,
* positivism,
* interpretivism;
* strengths and limitations of different methods and sources in relation to these issues.
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| * **Practical, ethical and theoretical factors influencing choice of research topic,**
* personal experience and
* policy concerns.
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| * + 1. **Consensus, conflict, structural and social action theories (A level)**
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| **The difference between consensus and conflict theories of society, including** * consensus theories such as functionalism, the New Right,
* conflict theories, ie Marxism and feminism;

**The major variants of such theories,** * scientific and humanistic Marxism;
* liberal, radical, Marxist etc feminism.
* Marx,
* Gramsci,
* Althusser,
* Durkheim,
* Parsons,
* Merton
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| **The difference between structural theories such as functionalism and Marxism, and action theories**;* the main types of action theory, such as
* social action theory,
* symbolic interactionism and
* ethnomethodology.
* Weber,
* Mead,
* Blumer,
* Becker,
* Goffman,
* Garfinkel
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| * + 1. **The concepts of modernity and post-modernity in relation to sociological theory (A level)**
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| **The concepts of modernity and postmodernity, including variants such as late modernity.*** Baudrillard,
* Giddens,
* Beck,
* Harvey
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| **Modernist and postmodernist theories of contemporary society.*** Baudrillard,
* Giddens,
* Beck,
* Harvey
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| * 1. **The nature of science and the extent to which Sociology can be regarded as scientific (A Level)**
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| **Debates about the scientific status of sociology:** * positivist and interpretivist views.
* Durkheim,
* Weber,
* Glaser & Strauss,
* Atkinson
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| **Different views of the natural sciences and implications for sociology’s scientific status.*** Popper,
* Kuhn,
* realism,
* Keat & Urry
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| **The relationship between theory and methods** |
| **The relationship between theoretical perspective and preference for particular research methods and sources of data,** * positivism and quantitative data,
* interpretivism and qualitative data.
* Durkheim,
* Atkinson,
* Jack Douglas
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| * 1. **Debates about subjectivity, objectivity and value freedom (A Level)**
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| **Concepts of** * objectivity,
* subjectivity,
* value freedom and
* ideology.
* Comte,
* Durkheim,
* Marx,
* Weber,
* Becker,
* Gouldner
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| **Different views of whether sociology can and should be objective or value free,*** classical sociology,
* value neutrality and
* committed sociology;
* relativism.
* Comte,
* Durkheim,
* Marx,
* Weber,
* Becker,
* Gouldner
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| * 1. **The relationship between Sociology and social policy (A Level)**
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| **The difference between social problems and sociological problems;** * perspectives on social policy
* perspectives on the role of sociology in relation to policy.
* Worsley,
* Comte,
* Durkheim,
* Marx,
* Murray
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