

AS Sociology (02): *Researching and understanding social inequalities*

H Pallier

This component explores the methods of sociological enquiry and develops knowledge and understanding of contemporary social processes and social change in the context of social inequality and difference. This component aims to foster the development of critical and reflective thinking with a respect for social diversity in terms of social class, gender, ethnicity and age. It develops links between the nature of sociological thought and methods of sociological enquiry.

Although not directly assessed, this component encourages learners to carry out their own small-scale research projects as a way of enhancing their sociological understanding of methodology, substantive topic areas and core themes.

Section A: Research methods and research social inequalities

1. **What is the relationship between theory and methods?**
2. **What are the main stages of the research process?**
3. **Which methods are used in sociological research?**

Section B Option 2: Understanding social inequalities

1. **What are the main patterns and trends in social inequality and difference?**
2. **How can patterns and trends in social inequality and difference be explained?**

SECTION A

1. What is the relationship between theory and methods?			
Unit Content	R	A	G
Positivism social research theory			
Positivist social research: patterns			
Positivist social research: trends			
Positivist social research: objectivity			
Positivist social research: value freedom			
Positivist social research: quantitative data			
Interpretivism social research theory			
Intepretivist social research: meanings and experiences			
Intepretivist social research: verstehen and empathy			
Intepretivist social research: rapport			
Intepretivist social research: subjectivity			
Intepretivist social research: researcher imposition			
Intepretivist social research: reflexivity			
Intepretivist social research: qualitative data			
Key research concept: validity			
Key research concept: reliability			
Key research concept: representativeness			
Key research concept: generalisability			

2. What are the main stages of the research process?

Unit Content	R	A	G
Key concepts in the research process: factors influencing the choice of research topic			
Key concepts in the research process: aims/hypothesis/research questions			
Key concepts in the research process: primary data			
Key concepts in the research process: secondary data			
Key concepts in the research process: operationalisation			
Key concepts in the research process: pilot studies			
Key concepts in the research process: data collection			
Key concepts in the research process: respondent validation			
Key concepts in the research process: longitudinal studies			
Key concepts in the research process: interpretation of data			
Key concepts in the research process: the relationship between sociology and social policy			
Practical factors influencing choice of sampling process			
Ethical factors influencing choice of sampling process			
Theoretical factors influencing choice of sampling process			
Random sampling techniques			
The advantages and disadvantages of random sampling techniques.			
The advantages and disadvantages of non-random sampling techniques.			
Systematic sampling techniques			
Stratified sampling techniques			
Snowball sampling techniques			
Volunteer sampling techniques			
Opportunity sampling techniques			
Purposive sampling techniques			
Quota sampling techniques			
Understand how samples are accessed and the issues with access (gatekeeping)			
Understand ethical considerations such as those used by the British Sociological Association and why ethical principles should be followed			

3. Which methods are used in sociological research?

Unit Content	R	A	G
Research methods: questionnaires			
Research methods: structured interviews			
Research methods: statistical data (official and non-official)			
Research methods: content analysis			
Research methods: observations (participant/non-participant/covert/overt)			
Research methods: unstructured interviews			
Research methods: semi structured interviews			
Research methods: ethnography			
Quantitative and qualitative data			
Mixed methods: triangulation			
Mixed methods: methodological pluralism			
The use of research methods in the context of social inequalities			

SECTION B

1. What are the main patterns and trends in social inequality and difference?

Unit Content	R	A	G
Gender inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to work and employment			
Gender inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to income and wealth			
Gender inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to poverty			
Gender inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to social mobility			
Gender inequality and difference: patterns and trends in the UK compared to general global patterns and trends			
Social class inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to work and employment			
Social class inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to income and wealth			
Social class inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to poverty			
Social class inequality and difference: patterns and trends in relation to social mobility			
Social class inequality and difference: patterns and trends in the UK compared to general global patterns and trends			
Consider how social inequalities affect life chances			
Consider evidence of social inequalities from a range of areas of social life.			

2. How can patterns and trends in social inequality and difference be explained?

Unit Content	R	A	G
Functionalist explanations (main concepts/ideas) of social difference and inequality			
Marxist explanations (main concepts/ideas) of social difference and inequality			
Feminist explanations (main concepts/ideas) of social difference and inequality			

Using the Specification Check:

Revised (Red): Look through books and notes for all key terms, contemporary examples, explanations and sociologists relevant to the aspect of the specification.

Checked (Amber): Can answer part *a* and part *b* questions based on these topics (ideally in timed conditions).

Confident (Green): Happy that you are secure in both your knowledge of the subject content and applying it to different exam questions.