This issue contains some exercises to help you to develop your knowledge and understanding of theory and methods, and to give you practice in answering exam-style questions.

In addition, there is a PowerPoint slide show on ‘The white working class’, a topic which has links to several areas in sociology, such as social class, culture and identity, education and the media.

Although the second set of questions below are based on the AQA A-level exam structure, it would benefit all students to write answers to them, as this is such an important area in the study of sociology.

Below are some short-answer questions on theory and methods. They are not in the style of any particular exam, but are designed to help you to pick out some of the most important points about theory, methods and the relationship between them. Initially, you may wish to use your textbooks and class notes to answer them, but it would be a good idea, as the exam date approaches, to return to them and answer them again without using outside references.

How much you write for each will largely be determined by the question, but try to keep your answers concise and to the point.

### Exercise 1

#### Short-answer questions

1. Identify some of the ways in which the social characteristics of the researcher might make it difficult to conduct participant observation.
2. Identify three advantages of using large-scale surveys in sociological research.
3. Identify three disadvantages of using large-scale surveys in sociological research.
4. Identify three types of personal document that could be used in sociological research.
5. Identify three potential problems of using personal data in sociological research.
6. Identify four factors that could influence a sociologist’s choice of research method.
7. Explain what is meant by (a) validity and (b) reliability.
8. Explain the difference between structured and unstructured interviews.
9. Identify four types of official statistics that could be helpful in sociological research.
10. Explain the difference between overt and covert participant observation.
11. Explain what is meant by the hypothetico-deductive method of conducting research.
12 Explain what is meant by ‘sampling’.
13 Explain what is meant by ‘random sampling’.
14 Explain what is meant by ‘stratified random sampling’.
15 Explain what is meant by ‘snowball sampling’.
16 Under what circumstances might a sociologist choose to use snowball sampling?
17 Explain what is meant by (a) quantitative methods and (b) qualitative methods.
18 Explain why a sociologist following the interactionist approach might choose to use qualitative methods in their research.
19 Explain why a sociologist following the positivist approach might choose to use quantitative methods of research.
20 Explain what is meant by ‘triangulation’.

Exercise 2

Exam-style questions

The next section of these exercises provides practice in answering exam-style questions. In the exam, you would be provided with an item to give you some background, or some pointers, and it is important that, in such cases, you make use of the information provided. In these examples, however, no additional information is supplied, though future issues will give sample questions that provide you with this.

The ‘outline and explain’ questions typically carry 10 marks, while the ‘evaluate’ questions typically carry 40 marks. This should give you guidance regarding the amount of detail you provide, and the length of your answer. The print versions of SOCIOLOGY REVIEW will provide you with more detailed guidance regarding how to tackle both types of question, so be sure to make use of this.

1 Outline and explain two disadvantages of using official statistics in sociological research.
2 Outline and explain two potential difficulties of using covert participant observation as a research method.
3 Evaluate the usefulness of the positivist approach to sociological research.
4 Evaluate the view that feminist approaches to sociological research have opened up hitherto neglected areas of the study of society.

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