

# How do sociologists investigate families?

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AQA A Level Sociology 7192 • Families & Households • L006 • v1.0

CONNECT & CHECK | SHARE | PRESENT | APPLY | RECALL & REVIEW

Connect & Check → Share → Present → Apply → Recall & Review. Distinguish quantitative and qualitative evidence; explain validity, reliability and representativeness; identify a sampling limit; justify a method and an ethical safeguard. Use fictional examples; no personal family disclosure is required.

## Recall and connect

Missed the preparation? A count can describe a pattern; an account can explore meaning. Define what is measured, choose appropriate evidence and plan informed, voluntary participation.

Retrieve L005, then connect a claim to the evidence needed to investigate it.

### R1

Why can two families with the same form have different experiences?

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### R2

What different evidence could show the amount of care and the meaning of fair care?

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### R3

Starting view: “The biggest sample always produces the best research.” Explain your judgement.

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## Discover questions and data

Research questions shape evidence choices. Numerical measures are quantitative. Accounts of meanings are qualitative. Either can be collected for the current study or reused from an existing source.

### D1

Write one quantitative and one qualitative question about unpaid care.

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### D2

Propose an operational definition of unpaid care and identify one boundary needing clarification.

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## Discover research quality

Research design matters more than a method label. A standardised question can produce consistent answers yet measure care poorly. A long interview can explore meanings but still be influenced by wording, recall and the interviewer. A large volunteer sample is not automatically representative. Explain each judgement in relation to the research question and the way the evidence is collected.

### D3

Explain validity, reliability and representativeness in your own words.

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### D4

Hinge: every repeat of a questionnaire excludes care for adult relatives. Does consistency establish validity for all unpaid care?

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## Discover ethical decisions

Plan voluntary informed consent, proportionate protection of private information and a way to skip or stop participation. Explain confidentiality honestly; removing names may not prevent identification from detail.

### D5

Improve “Surely your family shares care fairly?” and explain your change.

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### D6

Distinguish confidentiality from anonymity and suggest one safeguard.

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## Apply the study proposals

Fictional design exercise; no data collection is required. A team wants to investigate how adults aged 18 or over in one town divide unpaid care and what they consider fair. Proposal A: a closed online questionnaire advertised on a parents' forum, aiming for 200 volunteers. Proposal B: semi-structured interviews with 12 adults deliberately selected for varied care arrangements. Proposal C: a seven-day time-use diary with shared categories of care. These are proposals, not findings. The intended population includes adults who do not use the forum and adults without children.



Observe the visible activity and identify what further evidence is needed. This photograph also appears on slide 19.

### A1

What research activity is visible in the photograph, and which method details remain unknown?

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## Apply the case evidence

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### A2

For A and B, explain one useful feature and one limitation linked to the team's aims.

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### A3

What could C add, and what practical or ethical issue would need managing?

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Optional scaffold: The research question asks... This method could provide... However... This affects... A proportionate improvement would be...

## Challenge the design

A method choice is a reasoned trade-off. Match the evidence to the question.

### C1

Choose a method or combination for the two aims. Justify it and acknowledge one unresolved limit.

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### C2

Improve: “200 volunteers prove the town shares care equally.”

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## Prove and improve

Complete retrieval, then write independently for eight minutes.

### P1

Explain two problems of using questionnaires to investigate family life. [6 marks]

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### P2

Identify the problem, family example and effect in each paragraph. Improve a missing link.

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### P3

Return to R3. Explain one reason sample size alone cannot establish quality.

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## Prepare for Lesson 7

Read the passages on institutions, functions and evaluation.

### Institutions and society

Sociologists can ask what recurring institutions contribute to social life. Families, schools and economic organisations may perform overlapping activities.

### Functions as an explanation

A function is a contribution to a wider social system. Functionalists ask how institutions may help maintain order. A claimed contribution must still be examined, rather than assumed.

### Questions for evaluation

Ask who benefits, whether an activity is performed everywhere and whether another institution could perform it. Use fictional examples; no judgement about your own family is required.

#### F1

What is an institution, and what could it contribute to social life?

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#### F2

What question might a functionalist ask about families?

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#### F3

Give one question that would test a claimed function. Retrieve two L006 terms tomorrow and next week.

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## Retrieval check for self study

Complete before the extended response. Cover the key while answering. One mark per correct answer; total 6. Correct insecure ideas and retry tomorrow. Extended writing needs teacher review.

### Q1

Which is an example of quantitative data?

A An account of what fairness means   B An interview passage about care   C Reported minutes spent caring

### Q2

What does reliability concern?

A Consistency under comparable conditions   B Whether every sample is very large   C Whether all answers are anonymous

### Q3

What most directly threatens the coverage of proposal A?

A It has a clear research question   B Only forum users can see the invitation   C It concerns unpaid care

### Q4

Which question is leading?

A How many hours did you spend caring?   B What does fairness mean to you?   C Surely your family shares care fairly?

### Q5

What is informed consent?

A Agreement that can never be withdrawn   B Voluntary agreement based on clear information  
C Permission from one relative for all adults

### Q6

What is triangulation?

A Combining sources or approaches   B Selecting only convenient respondents   C Repeating the same mistake three times

## Self marking key

Q1: C. Q2: A. Q3: B. Q4: C. Q5: B. Q6: A.