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Paper 2

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MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

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Section A

- 1 Some sociologists believe that one of the purposes of research is to make the world a better place. This is why many have conducted research into issues such as the extent of poverty and educational opportunities of working class children. Therefore, the choice of research topics requires a *value judgement* that some aspect of social life is undesirable, and research that may lead to improvement in a given area can only be regarded as a good thing. It follows from this that these sociologists are concerned about how their research data is used and whose interests it serves.

However, other sociologists regard this view as mistaken. They say that any research carried out should be value-free and scientific. That is to say, there should be a clear separation between facts and a researcher's opinions so that the outcome of sociological research is neutral in value. The findings produced are not the concern of the sociologist, as it is for others to decide how research is used and whether or not it is acted upon in ways that may help people in society.

(a) What is meant by the term *value judgement*? [2]

- 1 One mark for a poorly expressed or otherwise limited answer that has some merit, e.g. 'someone's own view' or 'something that people believe to be right'.

An example on its own will not be credited. If an example is used to support a definition, thereby demonstrating understanding of the term, this will be credited.

- 2 Two marks for a clear and accurate definition.

A decision about what is right or wrong, good or bad that ultimately depends on personal belief.

(b) Describe two factors that may influence a sociologist's choice of research method. [4]

- 1 Relevant factors include:

- availability of funding
- time available
- theoretical perspective of sociologist
- size and availability of sample
- nature of the target population
- the researcher's skill set
- location
- any other reasonable point

- 2 One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

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(c) Explain how the values of the researcher may lead to research findings that contain bias. [8]

0–4 Points made may include:

- How a researcher's personal prejudices guide their interests which may influence and distort their work through:
 - The research choices made:
 - How a researcher interacts with their respondents may be influenced by values.
 - Researcher's interpretation of data may be affected by their values
- Different theoretical perspectives that sociologists adopt have built-in biases [this could be methodological, i.e. positivist/interpretivist or ideological, e.g. feminist/Marxist].
- Candidates may also note that since sociologists are real people it is inevitable that they are sometimes influenced by the common-sense ideas of their time, and this may then have a distorting influence on their research. There may be reference to Kuhn's paradigms in this respect.

Answers at this level are likely to show only limited appreciation of the issues raised by the question and make little use of relevant sociological concepts and theories

Lower in the band [1–2] there may be one point, or a few common sense observations or vague assertions about bias[1–2].

Higher in the band candidates will demonstrate some basic awareness of the way that the values of the researcher may be connected with bias in the research data, though the points raised are likely to be left implicit or not fully accurate [3–4].

5–8 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band responses will begin to identify the reasons why the values of the researcher may be connected with bias in the research data [5–6].

Higher in the band the explanation will be developed and well informed, perhaps including references to more than two of the listed problems, with a degree of development.

A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to six marks. To go higher, some of the points should be developed

This question asks candidates to 'explain', therefore there is no requirement for assessment.

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(d) Assess the argument that sociological research should be value-free. [11]

- 0–4 Answers at this level are likely to show only limited appreciation of the issues raised by the question.

Lower in the band, a few simple points about research methods in general or some observations about value freedom poorly linked to the question.

Higher in the band, an answer might contain one or two basic points agreeing with the question.

- 5–8 Answers at this level show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band, a simplistic list of arguments supporting the proposition with perhaps an implicit point against it, could gain 5 or 6 marks. A sound account of the positivist perspective that is not well applied to the question could also gain these marks. Comte, Durkheim or Popper's ideas and arguments may feature. At this level answers are likely to be lacking in breadth or depth.

Higher in the band, a more detailed account focused on the issues concerning values and the use of methods in sociology but without effective links to theory could gain 7 or 8 marks. For example, showing how positivist methodology has features that lead to value-free data. Conversely, a mainly one-sided answer that is done very well, could also gain up to 8 marks.

A descriptive answer cannot gain more than 8 marks.

- 9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate good sociological knowledge and understanding applied to the question. There will also be an assessment of the view on which the question is based.

Lower in the band [9–10], the assessment may be limited in range or depth, perhaps based on a simple juxtaposition of the competing views of the nature of sociological research [positivist v interpretivist], or confined to just one or two evaluative points, e.g. that the values of a researcher may shape their research interests, or that researcher bias may distort their studies. Evaluation that only suggests research *can* be value free rather than *should* be value free is likely to be worth no more than 9 marks

Higher in the band, the assessment may have more range or depth and respond directly to the question. There may also be reference to Gouldner or Becker's view that value-free sociology is neither possible nor desirable, or feminist and postmodernist views on the relationship between sociology and values but these are not necessary to achieve full marks.

Evaluation points need not be wide ranging or in great depth for candidates to achieve full marks.

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Section B

2 Explain and assess the strengths and limitations of the different types of interview used by sociologists. [25]

- Level 1 0–6** Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common sense observations.
- Lower in the band, answers may show misunderstanding about the nature of interviewing as a research method.
- Higher in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, about one method or interview methods in general but with very little detail or development that is relevant to the question as set
- Level 2 7–12** Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.
- Lower in the band [7–9], the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. Responses here are likely to be descriptive accounts of interviews as a sociological research method.
- Higher in the band [10–12], answers may either cover a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or cover a wider range of points in limited detail. For example, answers may consider the advantages or limitations of two or more types of interview methods, though not necessarily with equal emphasis.
- Answers that simply talk about interview methods in general can go no further than level two
- Level 3 13–18** Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.
- Lower in the band [13–15], answers may use only a limited range of knowledge, though there will be use of concepts/theory, but the points covered may lack development. Expect to see good knowledge and understanding of at least two types of interview method.
- Higher in the band [16–18], answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points. There should be good treatment of theoretical issues at this level – validity, reliability, objectivity, representativeness, etc., particularly at the higher end of the mark band.
- Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the view may not be fully convincing.
- The use of relevant examples from studies to support key points should be rewarded.
- There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4 19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

- **first**, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding;
- **second**, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question; and
- **third**, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

Lower in the band [19–21], the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated.

Higher in the band [22–25], there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. To reach the top of the band, answers must also cover more than two types of interview method. For example, semi-structured interviews might be mentioned as an alternative to structured/unstructured approaches. Group interviews might also be discussed. There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.

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**3 ‘Interpretivists provide the most convincing account of how people perform social roles.’
Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- Level 1 0–6** Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common sense observations
- Lower in the band, answers may show misunderstanding about the nature of social roles or be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, a few simple remarks about social roles
- Higher in the band, there may be one or two simple points perhaps showing some limited understanding of the process of socialisation.
- Level 2 7–12** Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.
- Lower in the band [7–9], the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. For example, some knowledge of the importance of socialisation in human development, with little or no reference to the interpretivist perspective as such.
- Higher in the band [10–12], answers may either cover a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or a wider range of points in limited detail. For example, there may be a basic attempt to contrast the functionalist view of socialisation with the interpretivist view. There may be reference to thinkers such as Mead.
- However, responses at this level are likely to be largely descriptive
- Level 3 13–18** Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.
- Lower in the band [13–15], answers may use only a limited range of knowledge, though there will be use of concepts/theory, but the points covered may lack development. Expect to see direct reference to the interpretivist notion that people are free to negotiate their social roles. A range of sociological perspectives are likely to feature in answers at this level too.
- Lower in the band, the discussion of the interpretivist perspective may lack subtlety and be rather narrow in the range of ideas/thinkers.
- Higher in the band [16–18], answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points. Here, a wider range of material on the interpretivist perspective will be covered and some answers may distinguish between different strands of interpretivism.
- There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4 19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

- **first**, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding of the interpretivist perspective on socialisation and social interaction;
- **second**, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question; and
- **third**, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

Lower in the band [19–21], the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated. The idea that people are free to negotiate their social roles will be fully explained. There will also be a sustained and well-informed assessment of the claim on which the question is based. The assessment may still rely mainly on juxtaposition of contrasting sociological theories; for example, structural versus action theories of human behaviour.

Higher in the band [22–25], there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. There should be a more direct analysis of the extent to which interpretivists are justified in claiming that people are free to negotiate their social roles. The analysis may take the form of, for example, arguing that the interpretivist position is not as 'voluntarist' as it might seem or as it has been characterised by some opponents. Another form of assessment would be to defend the determinist view of the influences on human behaviour, perhaps by referring to arguments from the structuralist perspective (e.g. Levi Strauss and Chomsky) or by noting relevant contributions from socio-biology. Post-modernist ideas might also be used to support (or possibly to refine) the overall tone of the interpretivist perspective. There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.