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Paper 2

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MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

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Section A

- 1** There is disagreement within sociology about the most appropriate way to do sociological research. Firstly, there are those who carry out research in a broadly scientific way, collecting data that can be used to test a *hypothesis*. In this way, they seek to explain the causes and functions of social phenomena, such as rates of divorce and levels of educational achievement. The research methods used are quantitative.

Sociologists who disagree with this approach believe that it is mistaken to see the social world as involving the same subject matter as the natural world that scientists investigate. It follows that the social world cannot be studied in the same way as the natural world. As a result, these sociologists are much more likely to use qualitative research methods. However, this approach has been criticised. For example, it is questioned how far sociologists are able to understand other people's behaviour objectively.

(a) What is meant by the term hypothesis? [2]

- 1 One mark for a partial definition such as 'something the sociologist wants to test' or 'a supposed relationship between things'.
- 2 Two marks for a clear and accurate definition.

A hypothesis is a statement about a relationship between concepts/variables that a sociologist believes to be true and will be tested against evidence.

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.

(b) Describe two qualitative research methods. [4]

- 1 Methods may include:
 - Unstructured, semi-structured or focus group interviews
 - Qualitative observations [specific types need not be cited as identification i.e. overt and covert/direct and indirect/participant and non-participant]
 - Qualitative content analysis [semiology]
 - Case studies
 - Open ended questionnaires
 - Any other reasonable response
- 2 One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks). The development may take the form of a feature of the method or an extension of the description of the method.

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- (c) Explain the problems that a sociologist may face in seeking to understand other people's behaviour. [8]

0–4 Many potential problems, including. For example:

- Researcher bias: the preconceptions and values of the observer may result in subjective interpretations. This may be linked to positivism.
- Researcher effect and the possibility that the people being observed may deliberately mislead the observer (Hawthorne effect)
- The ambiguous nature of many social actions
- A variety of practical difficulties, e.g. the difficulty in some cases of obtaining adequate access to the individuals or groups concerned.
- Researcher's skill set
- Any other reasonable response

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 will be a few commonsense observations or vague assertions about the problems sociologists face in understanding people's behaviour.

Higher in the band [3–4] there will be a more concerted attempt to develop the issues raised in the question, perhaps by referencing some of the practical difficulties involved in relation to the question.

- 5–8 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. There will be a clear attempt to explain the problems sociologists face in understanding other people's behaviour.

Lower in the band [5–6] an answer might develop two relevant points successfully.

Higher in the band [7–8] there may be a more expanded version of this type of answer, perhaps including references to more than two relevant but 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 strengths and limitations of adopting a scientific approach to sociological research. [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 [1–2], there might be a few simple points about research methods in general or some observations about natural science poorly linked to the question.

Higher in the band [3–4] one or two basic points about the strengths/limitations of using science as a model may feature.

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

Lower in the band, a list-like account of a few arguments for and/or against a scientific model might feature. Likewise, a sound account of the positivist perspective or its methods that is not particularly well applied to the question could also be worth five or six marks. At this level answers are likely to be lacking in breadth or depth.

Higher in the band [7–8] there may be a sound account of the issues concerning the use of scientific methods in sociology, with effective links to positivism. Arguments for and against using scientific methods may be addressed, perhaps by illustrating the salient features of different methods, though not necessarily in a balanced way.

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, the assessment may be limited in range or depth.

The issues around sociology as a science will be explained clearly and thoroughly. There will also be explicit links to theoretical perspectives with answers most likely to be constructed in terms of the debate between positivists and interpretivists, though there may also be useful references to feminist and postmodernist views on the relationship between sociology and science but this is not necessary to enter this level.

Higher in the band, the assessment may have more range or depth. Answers may include some overall evaluative statements about whether it is appropriate to use scientific methods in sociological research. The answer should respond directly to the question

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

Ideas and concepts likely to be included:

Hypothetico-deductive; Comte, Durkheim
Objectivity, subjectivity and value freedom
Reliable/valid/representative/generalisation
Falsification/Popper
Realism

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Section B

- 2 ‘Sociological studies that are based on observational methods will always produce more interesting findings than those that use questionnaires.’ 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 either research method.
- Higher in the band [4–6], there may be a few simple points made about either methods or a weak attempt to explain the view expressed in the question 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 account of questionnaires as a sociological research method or of types of observation.
- 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, there may be a basic attempt to contrast the limitations of questionnaires with the purported advantages of observational studies. Answers will be largely descriptive at this level.
- Answers that discuss only one of the methods are unlikely to rise above 10 marks and not beyond this level.
- 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 a range of knowledge, supported by concepts/theory. However, the points covered may lack development. Here, the view expressed in the question will be explained accurately, possibly by referring to the interpretivist critique of quantitative data and the methods (questionnaires, structured interviews) through which it is derived.
- 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, the explanation will be more developed and may make good use of relevant concepts such as validity, verstehen, and in-depth understanding.
- Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the view may not be fully convincing.

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;
- **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. Here, answers will offer a full and well-informed account of why the data collected using questionnaires might be considered inferior to the insights provided by observation studies. The assessment will cover a range of strengths and limitations of each research method (questionnaires and observation) and will demonstrate a sound understanding of the theoretical issues involved. Those that point out that each method may be chosen to fit a particular purpose/aim should be rewarded.

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, a response would possibly question what is meant by the term 'interesting' in relation to different types of sociological data, e.g. in the sense that the data yielded may contain surprising or fascinating details that other methods would not have reached. However, this is not necessary to enter this level.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion

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3 'Functionalists exaggerate how far people's behaviour is controlled by external social forces.' 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 be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, a few remarks about social forces.
- Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points with some limited understanding of how society influences the individual but with little or no further development that is relevant to the question.
- 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, a basic account of the importance of socialisation in human development, with little or no reference to the functionalist perspective. Answers may be rather list-like and likely to be lacking in some key respects.
- 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, some knowledge of the functionalist perspective on socialisation, but without clear reference to social forces.
- 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 a range of knowledge supported concepts/theory. However, the points covered may lack development. Expect to see direct reference to the functionalist notion that social roles are shaped by the fact that society exists as an external force shaping behavior, i.e. a structural one. At this level the discussion of the functionalist perspective may lack subtlety and be rather narrow in the range of ideas/thinkers.
- Higher in the band (16–18 marks), 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 functionalist perspective will be covered, for example, discussion of determinism and some answers may distinguish between different strands of functionalist thought.
- Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the view may not be fully convincing.

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 marks), 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. Answers at this level will provide a good account of the functionalist perspective on socialisation and social interaction. The idea that society exists as a constraining and shaping force on roles will be fully explained. There will also be a sustained and informed assessment of the claim on which the question is based. At this level, 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 marks), there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. There is likely to be a more direct analysis of the extent to which functionalists are justified in claiming that external forces predominate. The analysis may take the form of, for example, arguing that people have great freedom to construct social roles and that they are negotiable; the 'voluntarist' position might be outlined or Wrong's critique of the 'oversocialised' could be utilised. Post-modernist ideas might also be used to support (or possibly to refine) the overall approach taken by the interpretivist perspective. There may be reference to Giddens's structuration theory.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion