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Paper 2 Theory and Methods

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MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)	What is meant by the term <i>validity</i>? One mark for a partial answer such as 'validity means accurate' or 'validity means the study findings are correct'. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition. Validity is the term used in sociology to describe data that gives a true measurement or description of what it claims to measure or describe.	2	
1(b)	Describe <u>two</u> difficulties in gaining access to a study group. Difficulties in gaining access might include: - the group not wanting to be studied - being accepted by the group if a covert observer - blending into the group if the sociologist is from a different social background - making contact with the group in the first place - gatekeeper issues - explaining your presence in the group without arousing suspicion [for covert observers].	4	One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 · 2 marks).

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(c)	Explain why a sociologist might decide to use overt rather than covert observation. 0–4 Lower in the band a few simple points are likely to demonstrate limited understanding about what is meant by observation or be in some other way marginal to the question. Higher in the band a basic account of the differences between overt and covert observation with weak links to the question 5–8 Lower in the band a sound account of a couple of reasons that influence the researcher's choice of overt v covert. Higher in the band, there is likely to be a wider range of reasons with clear and accurate links to key concepts, theories and relevant studies. Reasons might include: - desire to retain objectivity - ethical reasons e.g. wanting to ensure the consent of those being observed - to avert the possibility of going native - practical reasons e.g. ability to record events contemporaneously, easier to obtain permission - cost – covert studies are likely to be more expensive - not suitable for the study.	8	A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to 6 marks. To go higher, some of the points should be developed Note: This question asks candidates to 'explain', therefore there is no requirement for assessment.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(d)	Assess positivist arguments against the use of participant observation. 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 describing the positivist perspective or PO in general might be worth 1 or 2 marks. Higher in the band, there may be a limited attempt to describe participant observation, with weak links to positivism or the set question. 5–8 Answers at this level show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. Lower in the band, a basic account of some strengths and weaknesses of PO but not well linked to positivism and perhaps relying partly on material in the stem could gain 5 or 6 marks. Higher in the band, a more detailed account that develops a range of the reservations held by positivists about the use of PO could gain 7 or 8 marks. A 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. The response will contain assessment. Lower in the band, there will be a good account that outlines positivist views on PO. However, at this level the analysis is likely to be juxtaposed with the interpretivist perspective, perhaps offering generalised assessment. At the top of the band, the assessment must either cover a range of issues and/or demonstrate depth of understanding.	11	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(d)	Positivist arguments: - Unscientific approach typically collecting qualitative data - Unreliable – cannot be replicated - Bias – covert PO leads to respondent behaviour being affected by researcher's presence or actions. Overt PO could lead to the Hawthorne effect. - Lacks objectivity – personal involvement can lead to invalid data ['going native'] - Subjective interpretation of data. - Unrepresentative samples. - Relevant practical issues: faulty recall, not always present. Evaluation points: - Ecological validity of the method arising from interpretivist thinking		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	‘The functionalist model of how society works has many limitations and few strengths.’ Explain and assess this view. 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, an outline of some general points about the nature of society that is largely unsociological. Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, a few weak points showing only a simple understanding of functionalist views offering very little detail or development. 7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. Other theories [probably Marxism or feminism] may be present at this level albeit in a fairly basic form. Lower in the band [7–9], the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. Answers may be rather list-like and are likely to focus on a basic account of functionalist theory without development. 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. There is unlikely to be links to different strands of functionalist thought and any reference to thinkers will be limited (Durkheim or Merton.)	25	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied well to answering both parts of the question. There is no <u>requirement</u> for assessment at this level although it may be present. At this level, a range of key concepts will be outlined e.g. value consensus, the organic analogy, social integration and equilibrium, anomie, manifest and latent functions, dysfunction etc. A range of thinkers may be cited such as Durkheim, Merton and Parsons. Lower in the band [13–15], whilst the account of functionalist theory will be sound, answers may use a limited range of knowledge, there will be less use of concepts and/or theory, and the points covered may lack development. Higher in the band [16–18], answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts and/or theory where relevant and include some well-developed points that address and analyse both strengths and limitations though not necessarily in a balanced way. 19–25 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. At this level, assessment is likely to be reliant on identifying the general strengths and limitations of functionalist theory with a focus greater on one rather than the other. Marxist criticisms are likely to feature most prominently, for example, Althusser's views. Alternatively, other theories [feminism, postmodernism, interpretivism] could all be used to critique various aspects of the functionalist model. However a different tack may be taken in respect of concepts like determinism. Higher in the band [22–25], there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. Assessment here is more likely to be shown by demonstrating how changes in modern societies may challenge underlying functionalist assumptions.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	Very good responses may defend the functionalist position despite its flaws, and might highlight the continuing influence of functionalism on how societies are understood 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. At this level expect an accurate and detailed account of the strengths and limitations of the functionalist model of society There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	‘Sociologists should always aim to study society in an objective way.’ Explain and assess this view. 0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common sense observations showing some awareness that there are different views about the purposes of sociological research or of human behaviour. Lower in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding about objectivity or the scientific method. Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding that demonstrates a basic understanding of the view in the question, but there will be very little detail or development that is relevant to the question as set. Answers at this level might content themselves with briefly outlining a few research methods. 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. Answers will be rather list-like and is more likely to offer a one-sided approach probably describing the positivist perspective but with few direct links to objectivity. 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. These may include some development of key points, perhaps introducing some interpretivist arguments but still rather descriptive and lacking clear links to the notion of objectivity.	25	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
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. There will be a solid indication that the candidate is aware of the debate between those who put forward the idea that sociological research is susceptible to an objective approach and those that reject this is unachievable. Lower in the band [13–15], there will be a sound account of the positivist position and some reference to the interpretivist alternative/rejection answers may use a limited range of knowledge, there will be less use of concepts/theory, and the points covered may lack development. Higher in the band [16–18], answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of studies, concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points although the analysis is likely to be somewhat juxtaposed and the understanding of objectivity rather implicit. 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 although it is likely to be present. 19–25 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. For example, some may focus on the practical difficulties that sociologists face when undertaking research that might compromise their objectivity. Higher in the band [22–25], there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. For example, candidates may question whether it is even theoretically possible to achieve objectivity in research i.e. that sociology can be a value free enterprise.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	A possible further approach is for candidates to question whether this is desirable to attempt objectivity on the grounds that sociologists should recognise the imposition of their own values and to take a committed stance. Reference to Becker or Marxism or feminism might support this line of argument. Answers at this level must achieve three things: First, there will be very good sociological knowledge and understanding of the underlying debate, namely, the notion that it is the responsibility of the sociologist to aspire to an objective approach Second, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question. Third, there must also be evidence of assessment. At this level expect an accurate and detailed account There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.		