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Paper 2 Theory and Methods

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MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)	What is meant by the term <i>overt observation</i>? One mark for a partial definition such as ‘...the researcher watches the group being studied.’ Two marks for a clear and accurate definition. In overt observation the sociologist chooses to reveal their identity to the study group who will know they are there to study their behaviour.	2	
1(b)	Describe two practical problems with observational research. Practical problems might include: - Gaining access to a group - Remaining incognito - Influencing the behaviour of group members by actions - Hawthorne effect – influence by presence. - Recording events/note taking [faulty recall] ‘Going native’ - Length of time - Expense - Data overload	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 it might be important to observe people in their own environment. 0–4 Lower in the band, a few simple points are likely to demonstrate a limited understanding of observational techniques or be in some other way marginal to the question. Higher in the band, a basic account of some of the strengths of observational techniques. The response will have weak links to wording of the question. 5–8 Lower in the band, a sound account put forward attempting to explain some advantages of observing people in their own environment. This may well be linked to a reasonable understanding of observational techniques Higher in the band, distinctions between participant and non participant observation may be made, or perhaps reference to alternative methods as a way of illustrating the supposed importance of observation. Good responses may identify why observation is valid and in what ways. There is likely to be clear and accurate links to theoretical perspectives and relevant key concepts. Supporting reasons might include: The depth of understanding gained and the validity of the research data. The ability to experience the way of life of the study group in a natural setting without imposing researcher's views [ecological validity] The ability to observe interaction and understand meanings [verstehen, interpretivism]. The opportunity to study groups that might be otherwise difficult to access [deviant, subcultural groups]. Allows theories to emerge from the research as it progresses	8	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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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(d)	Assess the view that ethical issues are the main problem in using covert 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 PO might be worth 1 or 2 marks. Higher in the band, there may be a limited attempt to describe the problems of covert PO but with no direct links to ethical issues. 5–8 Answers at this level show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. Lower in the band, a simple account of covert PO but with only weak links to ethical issues could gain 5 or 6 marks. Higher in the band, a more detailed account that explores the view that ethical issues are the main concern with covert 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.	11	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	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], there will be a good account of PO and the assessment may focus attention on non-ethical problems. Alternatively, there may be an attempt to look at arguments that justify their unethical behaviour. At the top of the band, the assessment must either cover a good range of issues and/or demonstrate depth of understanding. Ethical issues might include: - Any deception by the researcher - The confidentiality/anonymity of the information gained. - Psychological impact on the group who find out that they have been studied without permission. - Potential involvement in dubious activities Evaluation points might include: - Theoretical issues revolving around validity and reliability - Justification of unethical practice - Practical issues e.g. access		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2	‘The main weakness of Marxist theory is that it exaggerates the amount of conflict in society.’ 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 about the nature of social conflict Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, answers may demonstrate a basic understanding of value consensus but offer very little detail or development that is relevant to the question as set. 7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. Other theories [probably functionalism] may be present at this level albeit in a fairly basic form. Lower in the band [7–9], the answer will be rather list-like and be confined to a narrow range of points about Marxist theory lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. 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 will include some extension of key points, perhaps through references to Marxist thinking about society and the focus they place on conflict rather than value consensus and social harmony.	25	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding of the Marxist perspective and the idea of conflict. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question. Lower in the band [13–15], answers may give a sound account of Marxist views but the range of knowledge shown is limited. 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/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points. Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the Marxist critique may not be fully developed or convincing. There is no requirement for assessment at this level. 19–25 Lower in the band [19–21], the assessment may be largely delivered through a juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories of social order. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated e.g. suggesting a different ‘main weakness.’ Higher in the band [22–25], there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question e.g. candidates may turn the question around and offer arguments or empirical evidence that supports the Marxist position. Alternatively, other theoretical positions may be used to shed light on the debate from a different angle		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	Answers at this level must achieve three things: First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding of the Marxist position and the functionalist critique. 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 there is likely to be an accurate and detailed account of functionalist arguments rejecting the Marxist analysis of society in particular that of their view of levels of conflict in society There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3	‘Sociological research should aim to find solutions to society’s problems.’ 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, some brief comments about the nature of sociological research and/or social problems. Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of the purposes for which sociologists might use their research but offer very little detail or development that is relevant to the question as set. 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 there may be some general discussion of views held about the possible uses of sociological research. Alternatively, there may be more focus on social problems themselves. 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. This might include some references to the debate that underlies the question i.e. between those who favour a committed approach to research, and those who argue for a value-neutral approach. There may be indirect links to relevant theoretical perspectives.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding of the ideas of those who have argued that sociologists should use their research to help address social problems e.g. Marxists, feminists or the likes of Mills, Becker, Goffman. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question. Lower in the band [13–15], 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 concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points. Look to reward responses that include reference to actual problems. Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the view put forward in the question may not be fully convincing. There is no requirement for assessment at this level. 19–25 Lower in the band [19–21], the assessment may be largely delivered through a juxtaposition of contrasting theories/arguments over the debate about values in sociology. 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. For example, candidates may question whose interests sociological research serves; who may benefit from efforts to solve problems; what values support the idea of social engineering and what kind of society this might give rise to.		

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
	Answers at this level must achieve three things: First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding of the arguments and theoretical perspectives that support the idea that sociology should be about providing solutions to society's problems. 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 to see clear assessment of the view that sociologists should use their research as a means of resolving social problems There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion		