

SOCIOLOGY

9699/21

Paper 2 Theory and Methods

May/June 2015

1 hour 30 minutes

No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet is provided inside this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer Question 1 and **either** Question 2 **or** Question 3.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.



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Section A

Answer question 1.

Positivists believe that the best way to find out about social behaviour is by applying the methods of the physical sciences [e.g. chemistry and biology]. This doesn't necessarily mean using laboratory experiments, as to use this method in sociological research would give rise to *ethical issues*. However, positivists do believe that sociologists should use quantitative methods that aim to identify and measure social structures. A good example of this approach would be Durkheim's study of suicide.

A positivist approach allows the researcher to be as objective as possible and to prevent their own values and prejudice intruding upon the research process. This is why positivists prefer to collect data that is quantifiable and can be easily compared in order to establish correlations between variables and produce reliable data. It follows from this that research should be designed in such a way that other sociologists can replicate it and obtain similar results so as to confirm the evidence.

- 1 (a) What is meant by the term *ethical issues*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** sociological research methods favoured by positivists, apart from laboratory experiments. [4]
- (c) Explain why some sociologists have questioned the value of quantitative data. [8]
- (d) Assess the view that the findings of sociological research are only convincing when positivist methods are used. [11]

Section B

Answer **either** question 2 **or** question 3.

- 2 'Practical factors are more important than theoretical factors in influencing the choice of research method in sociology.' Explain and assess this view. [25]
- 3 'Human behaviour can be fully explained by the process of socialisation.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

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