

Paper 2 Theory and Methods

1 hours 30 minutes

Answer both section A and one question from Section B

Section A

Section A: Compulsory

One of the central concerns of Sociology is to explain how and why societies hold together. What prevents societies breaking down into lawlessness and chaos? This is known as the problem of social order. There are essentially two types of explanation of social order. One is associated with functionalist theory and the work of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons in particular. Functionalists focus on the role of shared norms and values in maintaining cohesion in society. The second explanation of social order derives from the Marxist tradition. For Marx, social order is the product of the balance of power between competing groups. This involves the powerful constraining weaker groups, with cohesion sustained through economic pressures, political and legal coercion, and ruling class ideology. This type of order implies ongoing conflict and a struggle for change, rather than enduring stability. In Marxist theory, the State plays a key role in managing conflict and maintaining social control in the interests of the ruling class.

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

(b) Describe two examples of how economic pressures may play a part in maintaining social order. [4]

(c) Explain the role of the State in managing conflict and maintaining social control. [8]

(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of the functionalist and Marxist theories of social order. [11]

Section B: Choose one question

1. 'Greater certainty can be achieved in sociological research by using the methods favoured by positivists'. Explain and assess. [25]

2. 'The theoretical approach favoured by the sociologist is the main factor influencing his or her choice of research methods.' Explain and assess this view. [25]