

Section A

Answer question 1.

- 1 A distinction is often made in sociology between two different perspectives: positivism and *interpretivism*. Broadly, positivists believe that to understand the social world accurately it is best to follow a similar approach to that of the natural sciences. In terms of sociological methods this means adopting research tools that will result in quantitative data. Interpretivists, on the other hand, disagree. They take a different view about the methods that should be employed, preferring qualitative methods. This leads interpretivists to favour using most types of interviews.

Examples of qualitative methods include semi-structured interviews and focus groups (sometimes called group interviews). In each semi-structured interview, there is one interviewer and one respondent. The researcher will use the same set of questions for each participant, but may ask additional ones, too. In a focus group there is one interviewer and usually about 8–10 respondents. In this case, the role of the interviewer is to guide the group through a set of issues rather than to lead them, hopefully encouraging the participants to talk to each other.

- (a) What is meant by the term *interpretivism*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** advantages of using a focus group. [4]
- (c) Explain why a researcher may choose to use a semi-structured interview. [8]
- (d) Assess interpretivist arguments against the use of questionnaires. [11]

Section B

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

- 2 Explain and assess the similarities and differences between Marxist and functionalist models of how modern industrial societies work. [25]
- 3 Explain and assess competing sociological theories of the processes that shape social identity. [25]

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