Is Sociology a Science?

Content – remember the work from last week about positivists and interpretivists.

What is science?

Durkheim, Douglas. Other views of scientific sociology.

Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, Realists Keat and Urry.

Past questions

10 markers

Outline and explain two arguments against the view that sociology is a science.

20 markers

Positivists believe that sociology can be a science by following the logic and methods of the natural sciences. In the view of positivism, this involves Gathering objective quantitative data to verify or prove hypothesis and Discover causal laws. While accepting the positivist view of science, interactionists reject the claim that we can study human beings in this way. However, positivism is just one view of what constitutes science. For example, Popper argues that science involves seeking to falsify hypothesis, while Kuhn argues that a scientific subject is one that has a unified paradigm.

Applying material from Item B7 and your own knowledge, Evaluate The claim that whether sociology can be a science depends on what we mean by science in the first place.

Positivists argue that by replicating the logic and methods of the natural sciences, sociology can uncover laws of human behaviour. They believe that, like natural scientists, sociologists should you use quantitative data to deduce objectively whether a hypothesis is true or false. However, sociologists from other perspectives have different views, not only on whether this is possible but on the very nature of science itself.

Applying material from Item B8 and your own knowledge, Evaluate the claim that sociology can and should be a science.

Early positivist sociologists believe that sociology was a ‘science of society’ that would enable us to discover the causes of social problems and offer solutions to them. Sociologist research findings would then enable the state to implement appropriate social policies to deal with the problems. In the same way as medical research can discover cures for diseases, so sociological research would help solve society's problems. However, Marxists claim that the main function of social policy is to maintain capitalism and that the role of sociologists should therefore be to criticise policy, not to serve the capitalist state.

Applying material from item B15 and your own knowledge, Evaluate different sociological perspectives reviews of the relationship between sociology and social policy.

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| Yes | No |