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THE
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THIS SOCIOLOGICAL LIFE
ODEON

A VOSS AND PIKE CASEFILE COMPANION

This Sociological Life

The sociology behind every section of the mystery

Play the Adventure | Solve the Mystery | Learn the Sociology

How to use this guide

This guide takes each numbered section of the casefile in order and shows the sociology it is built on. Every entry has the same shape:

- What happens: a one-line reminder of the scene.
- The sociology: the theory, concepts and thinkers from the chapter that sit behind it.
- How the story dramatizes it: where the idea shows up in character, clue or choice.
- Evaluation points: strengths, limitations and comparisons, for A-level style evaluation.
- Textbook: where to find the idea in the chapter. The chapter has no page numbers, so references are to its headings.
- Teacher note (shaded box): links to the comprehension questions, branching notes, and common student errors.

Teacher notes can be deleted before sharing with students: each one is a single shaded box at the end of an entry.

A few notes on the source material

- Section numbers follow the casefile and run from 1 to 50; clue letters run from A to O.
- Players see only the scenes on their route. This guide covers all 50 scenes, including those a given player will never meet. In the casefile, Hume dies late on the Monday night and is found on the Tuesday morning, two days before his Thursday lecture.
- Where a scene touches an idea that is not in this chapter (for example labelling), the teacher note says so, so you can tell chapter content from extension.

Section map at a glance

Click a section number to jump to its entry.

Sec.	Title	Main sociology	Textbook heading
Part 1: The Lecture and the Call			
1	The Lecture	Comte; the three stages; the origins of sociology	Origins; Comte
2	The Question After	Fact v. opinion; communal and sceptical norms; confidentiality	Sociology as a Reasoned and Rigorous Study of Social Life; Ethos (Communal, Sceptical)
3	The Telephone	Uses of sociological knowledge; the sceptical attitude	The uses of sociological knowledge; Ethos (Sceptical)
Part 2: The Convenient Verdict			
4	Hume's Office	Durkheim and solidarity; testing explanations (Popper)	Origins > Durkheim; Sociology as a science > Defining science; Procedures
5	The Medication	Falsification; positivism's faith in "the facts"; knowledge as control	Sociology as a science > Procedures; Positivism; The role of values
6	The Archive	Merton's ethos; prediction; Marx and social control	Sociology as a science > Ethos; Positivism; Origins > Marx
7	The Department	Funding and values; who is involved in research	The uses of sociological knowledge; the role of values > Research considerations
8	The Case Board	Comte revisited; emergent (interpretivist) design; explanation v. weapon	Origins > Comte; Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent research design)
Part 3: Pryor, Positivism and Disinterestedness			
9	Dr Aldous Pryor	Positivism; value-freedom v. value-neutrality; use of research	Sociology as a science > Positivism; Ethos (Disinterested); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge
10	The Consultancy Contract	Disinterested norm; sponsor pressure	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested); Postmodernism (practical criticisms)
11	The Methodology Memo	Universal norm; ad hominem; qualitative v. quantitative evidence	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Universal); Positivism; Interpretivism
12	What Pryor Won't Say	Intellectual conflict v. motive; "not disproven" v. proven	Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Sceptical)
13	Return	Sincerity v. bias; ideational knowledge	The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge (ideational knowledge)
Part 4: Halvorsen and Interpretivism			
14	Dr Wren Halvorsen	Interpretivism; empathy; research closeness	Sociology as a science > Interpretivism
15	The Fieldwork Notes	Qualitative meanings; emergent design; consent and repurposing	Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent design; data analysis); The role of values > Research considerations
16	The Fenn Family	Social construction of meaning; solidarity; consequences of prediction	Sociology as a science > Interpretivism; Origins > Durkheim; The uses of sociological knowledge (social policy)

Sec.	Title	Main sociology	Textbook heading
17	What Halvorsen Knows	Understanding v. judging; Coser and openness	Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (evaluation); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge
Part 5: Abara and Postmodernism			
18	Dr Corinne Abara	Postmodernism; metanarratives; truth and power	Sociology as a science > Postmodernism
19	The Cynical Paper	Power and funding; theory v. self-interest; ad hominem	Sociology as a science > Postmodernism (practical criticisms); Ethos (Universal)
20	What Abara Knows	Relativism v. personal responsibility; acknowledging values	Sociology as a science > Postmodernism; The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge
Part 6: Ashby, Funding and Institutional Values			
21	Professor Marguerite Ashby	Funding and research; institutional interests; economic power	The role of values > Research considerations; Origins > Marx
22	The Funding Figures	Dependence on funders; intended and unintended consequences	The role of values > Research considerations; The uses of sociological knowledge (social policy)
23	The Tenure Offer	Persuasion v. force (Marx); personal stake; Merton's disinterestedness	Origins > Marx; Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested)
24	Confirming the Figures	Verification; structural motive v. specific act	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Sceptical); Procedures
Part 7: Lyle and the Uses of Sociological Knowledge			
25	Conrad Lyle	Knowledge as a commodity; Campbell's critique; legal v. ethical	Sociology as a science > Postmodernism (practical criticisms); The role of values > Research considerations
26	The Pitch Deck	Prediction and control; policy uses of research; deviancy amplification	The uses of sociological knowledge; Sociology as a science > Positivism
27	What Lyle Won't Say	Influence by persuasion; alibi and opportunity	Origins > Marx; The role of values > Research considerations
Part 8: Jonah and Whose Evidence Counts			
28	Jonah Pike	Closed v. open questions; who gets asked and how	The role of values > Research considerations (choice of method); Positivism; Interpretivism
29	The Test	Open-ended interviewing; respondents as participants	Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent design; data collection)
30	What Jonah Knows	Researcher decisions; records and validity; cross-checking	The role of values > Research considerations (analysis); Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability)
31	Dismissed	Researcher effect; closed questions shut down accounts	Sociology as a science > Postmodernism; Positivism; Interpretivism
32	Jonah's Errand	Verification; combining human and machine records	Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability)
33	What Jonah Found	Reliability v. validity; sponsor pressure and altered data	Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability and validity); Postmodernism (practical criticisms)

Sec.	Title	Main sociology	Textbook heading
Part 9: Gathering the Case			
34	The Case Board, Again	Quantifying evidence; thresholds as decisions	Sociology as a science > Positivism; The role of values > Research considerations
35	Too Soon	Pattern v. proof; scientific honesty and bluffing	Sociology as a science > Procedures; The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge (ethical knowledge)
36	The Grand Lantern	Communal norm; public accountability; Coser's value-neutrality	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge
37	Which Case to Make	Explanation "from without" v. "from within"	Sociology as a science > Positivism; Interpretivism
38	Evidence First	Positivist presentation; explanation "from without"	Sociology as a science > Positivism
39	Hume's Own Words	Values in research; knowledge and its use	The role of values; Dimensions of knowledge
40	The Accusation	Hypothesis and evidence; universalism and status	Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Universal)
Part 10: The Case Against Pryor and the Six Endings			
41	The Case Against Pryor	Structure and action; sufficiency of evidence	Origins > Weber; Sociology as a science > Procedures
42	The Confrontation	Disinterestedness; value-freedom exposed; intended v. unintended consequences	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested); Positivism; The role of values
43	The Choice	Communal norm; public v. private accountability	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The uses of sociological knowledge
44	The Easiest Name	Universalism and status; power and whose version counts	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Universal); Postmodernism
45	The Road Not Taken	Sceptical norm abandoned; persuasion and incentive	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Sceptical); Origins > Marx
46	A Heart Is a Heart	Untested explanations; unaccountable use of knowledge	Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Communal)
47	Arrest, Quietly	Formal v. effective publicity; communal norm	Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The uses of sociological knowledge
48	This Sociological Life	Coser's value-neutrality; public accountability; social action	The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge; Origins > Weber
49	Reasonable Doubt	Pattern v. proof; reliability and validity	Sociology as a science > Defining science; Procedures
50	The Wobble	Circumstantial evidence; the weight of a qualitative document	Sociology as a science > Defining science (validity); Interpretivism

Part 1: The Lecture and the Call

The story opens with sociology's founding promise (that society can be studied with reason and evidence) and immediately plants the question the whole casefile will test: what happens when that promise meets money, power and convenience?

Section 1: The Lecture

Leads to: 2

What happens: *Voss lectures on Comte. Jonah Pike asks whether reason "won".*

The sociology. Comte (1830) argued that every society passes through three stages: the theological (order based on religious belief and control), the metaphysical (a transitional phase of upheaval in which science challenges the old religious order) and the positive (science and reason reveal how the social world works and replace religion as the basis of order). He called the new science of social development La Sociologie and based it on the positivist principles already used in physics and chemistry. Comte was a consensus thinker: for him order is created and maintained through co-operation. His ideas grew out of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

How the story dramatises it. Voss summarises the three stages almost exactly as the chapter does, and SOCIOLOGIE is circled on the whiteboard. Jonah's question, "Did reason win?", is the casefile's central question in disguise. Her answer ("not yet. Possibly not ever") sets up the irony that drives the plot: Hume's lifelong faith that collecting facts properly would lead to a better society is the positive-stage faith that has just collapsed.

Evaluation points.

- For Comte: his insistence on evidence over superstition underpins the claim that sociology produces factual, not opinion-based, knowledge (Ritzer; Sugarman).
- Against Comte: the model assumes one upward path of progress and ignores conflict and power. Candour shows reason being used for control, not liberation.
- Compare with Marx: where Comte sees order through co-operation, Marx sees it through domination, which fits the later scenes better.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins; Comte

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Links to Question A (Comte's three stages, 6 marks). Encourage students to separate describing the stages (knowledge) from applying them to Hume's crisis (application). Section 8 supplies the application: reason "sold to the highest bidder".
>
> Detail worth pointing out: Comte's "La Sociologie" appears on the whiteboard as SOCIOLOGIE, the word the chapter says he coined.

Section 2: The Question After

Leads to: 3

What happens: *Jonah says nobody will explain why some Candour data is "sensitive". The ethics committee cites an "enhanced confidentiality protocol".*

The sociology. The chapter says sociological knowledge counts as factual because it is "systematically and objectively created and tested", and that sociologists are interested in how facts are created and linked. Merton's scientific ethos adds two relevant rules: science is communal (knowledge is public, open to peer review and replication, never taken "on trust") and sceptical (nothing is beyond criticism). The chapter also notes that researchers must keep an ethical objectivity: they must not falsify data.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah codes data without being told why parts of it are restricted. A rule that cannot be explained is a rule that cannot be checked. Voss's reply (ethics committees "exist for exactly that") is true but evasive: an institutional process stands in for an answer.

Evaluation points.

- Jonah's question is the sceptical norm in action: if a process cannot be explained, it cannot be scrutinised or replicated.
- A counter-point: some confidentiality is legitimate, because it protects respondents. The issue is whether secrecy protects the participants or the project.
- Evaluate: who decides what is "sensitive", and who benefits from that decision?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a Reasoned and Rigorous Study of Social Life; Ethos (Communal, Sceptical)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Plants the thread for the later communal-norm failure (Clue L). Useful discussion: the difference between confidentiality (protecting people) and secrecy (protecting an organisation).
>
> The chapter defers detailed research ethics to a later chapter, so keep answers to the basics here: no falsifying, critical detachment, accountability for use.

Section 3: The Telephone

Leads to: 4 or 45

What happens: *DS Callum Rook asks Voss to read Hume's files before he accepts an "easy explanation". She can go, or decline.*

The sociology. The chapter says sociology's contribution to practice is more often indirect than direct: it informs public debate and how institutions define and measure problems. Here, a police officer needs a sociologist to read a research archive that means "nothing" to him. Underneath is Merton's sceptical norm: accepted explanations must keep being tested.

How the story dramatises it. Rook has a ready-made verdict (natural causes) and the authority to sign it off. Voss's choice is whether to ask the second question. Declining leads straight to Ending 2.

Evaluation points.

- Knowledge does not apply itself: it takes someone willing to use it. Sociology's impact depends on people like Voss choosing to engage.
- Evaluate the choice: a verdict is quick and tidy, but untested explanations are exactly what the sceptical norm warns against.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The uses of sociological knowledge; Ethos (Sceptical)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Branch point: choosing 46 produces Ending 2, The Road Not Taken. Ask students what Merton would say about a scientist who stops asking questions.

Part 2: The Convenient Verdict

Sections 4 to 8 turn Hume's death into a test of scientific procedure: a verdict arrives before any test, and Voss must decide whether to accept it or check it against evidence.

Section 4: Hume's Office

Leads to: 46 or 5

What happens: *Hume's office, his annotated Durkheim, and a pill organiser. Everyone calls it "sad, not suspicious".*

The sociology. Two ideas meet here. First, Durkheim: Hume's career question ("what holds a community together once the industry that built it disappears?") is Durkheim's problem of the "social glue". In traditional societies mechanical solidarity binds people by who they are (kin, clan); in modern societies organic solidarity binds them by what they do (paid work) and needs integrating mechanisms to make unrelated people feel part of a whole. Second, Popper: science identifies a problem, collects evidence and offers an explanation that has been tested and not disproven.

How the story dramatises it. A dockside community whose defining industry has gone has lost the "what we do" basis of organic solidarity, which is exactly Hume's specialism. The shelf of annotated Durkheim signals the theory behind the man. Meanwhile "natural causes" is offered as a finished explanation before anyone has tested it. The odd compartments are the first data that might not fit.

Evaluation points.

- Durkheim's strength: he treats society as something that can be studied objectively and explained by social facts, not only by individual choice.
- Limitation: organic solidarity assumes integration works. Dockside suggests that when it fails, a community may be treated as a problem rather than a moral bond.
- On testing: "plausible" is not the same as "tested". Only an explanation that has survived a real attempt to disprove it earns scientific status.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins > Durkheim; Sociology as a science > Defining science; Procedures

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Links to Question B (Durkheim and Hume's specialism, 6 marks). Ask students to find the exact sentence stating Hume's specialism and then apply mechanical and organic solidarity to Dockside.
>
> Branch point: choosing 47 produces Ending 3, A Heart Is a Heart.
>
> The chapter's coverage of Popper is brief (the hypothetico-deductive model; knowledge "not disproven"). Stronger students can be stretched to the falsification principle.

Section 5: The Medication

Leads to: 6 | Awards: Clue B (The Medication); Clue C (The Draft Lecture)

What happens: *Voss checks the organiser and finds a doubled Monday dose on the foil strip. On the desk is Hume's draft lecture title and a private note.*

The sociology. Scientific procedure means testing an explanation against the available evidence and asking whether it survives. It also makes predictive statements possible, as long as findings are replicable and reliable. Hume's note ("thirty years believing the facts would speak for themselves") describes positivism's central belief: that careful, objective collection of data is enough, and that researchers can keep their values out of the process (value-freedom).

How the story dramatises it. Clue B is evidence that falsifies "natural causes", found by checking the whole organiser and its foil strip instead of one compartment. Clue C shows Hume abandoning positivist confidence and promising to reveal what Candour "actually is".

Evaluation points.

- The scene supports both sides. Facts can overturn a convenient story (the pill count), yet Hume says facts alone are not enough, because someone chooses what to collect, how, and for whom.
- Link to postmodernism: Polanyi's claim that "all observation is theory-dependent" suggests even the pill count only matters because Voss already knows what to look for.
- A fair conclusion: evidence matters, but it needs accountable people around it.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Procedures; Positivism; The role of values

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Clues B and C. Links to Question C (can a researcher "stand apart", 8 marks) and Question E ("facts don't speak for themselves", 10 marks).
>
> Common error: treating Hume's doubt as postmodernism. By the end he lands on Coser's value-neutrality (declare your values), not on "there is no truth".

Section 6: The Archive

Leads to: 7 | Awards: Clue A (Project Candour); Clue L (Merton's Four)

What happens: *Candour's files include a colour-coded "community risk index" of Dockside. Hume's private list audits his department against Merton's four norms.*

The sociology. Merton (1942) said science needs an ethos: universal (judged by objective criteria, not by who the researcher is), communal (public, shareable knowledge), disinterested (no personal stake in the outcome) and sceptical (nothing beyond criticism). Positivism aims to quantify behaviour and predict it. Marx adds a different lens: power comes from economic ownership, and order is maintained through a mixture of force and persuasion, with class stratification ranking groups by wealth and power.

How the story dramatises it. Hume marks each norm "failed" or "failing": Universal (Pryor dismissed Wren's work because it was Wren's), Communal (the model's workings are proprietary), Disinterested (someone is being paid twice) and Sceptical (Hume himself let it lapse). Meanwhile the risk index turns a working-class community into a map of who should be watched.

Evaluation points.

- Strength of Merton: a clear, testable checklist for judging research.
- Limitation: the ethos describes how science should behave, not how scientists do. Prelli questions whether scientists share a "community of values", and Martinson et al. found 33% of 3,200 US scientists admitted misconduct.
- Hume's own failure under "sceptical" shows the norms rely on individuals choosing to apply them.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos; Positivism; Origins > Marx

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Clues A and L. Questions B (Marx, 6 marks) and C (two ways Candour fails Merton, 6 marks). The model answer uses universalism (Section 11) and disinterestedness (Section 10), but this scene gives evidence for all four, so able students can pick a different pair.
>
> Marx link (teacher key): a "bourgeois" institution using knowledge to manage a "proletarian" population.

Section 7: The Department

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Priti lists the four people with full access to Candour, and Lyle, "Thorncastle's man".*

The sociology. The chapter says topic choice is influenced by funding: those paying for research may influence not only what is studied but how, which raises the question of whether researchers are accountable for how their work is used (Project Camelot, Solovey 2001).

How the story dramatises it. Thorncastle “pays this department to exist”. The suspects are also a map of the chapter: Pryor (positivism), Halvorsen (interpretivism), Abara (postmodernism), Ashby (the institution) and Lyle (the market).

Evaluation points.

- Evaluate whether any one perspective explains what happened. The casefile suggests you need several, plus an account of money.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The uses of sociological knowledge; the role of values > Research considerations

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Planning task: before students read Sections 9 to 27, ask them to predict which perspective each character will represent, then check afterwards.

Section 8: The Case Board

Leads to: 9, 14, 18, 21, 25, 28, 32 (with JONAH_TRUST), 34

What happens: *Voss and Jonah pin up the evidence. The player can visit each thread in any order.*

The sociology. Two links. First, Comte’s promise that reason would replace superstition: Voss notes he “didn’t say anything” about reason being sold. Second, the interpretivist “emergent” design (Oberg): the researcher gathers widely because they cannot yet judge which data will matter, and analysis feeds back into further data collection.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah asks which suspect decided facts “were worth more as a weapon than as an explanation”, which is the choice between knowledge for understanding and knowledge for control. The hub also works like interpretivist research: follow threads, gather material, let the picture take shape.

Evaluation points.

- The investigation is non-linear and exploratory (interpretivist), but the later clue-count threshold (Section 34) is quantitative (positivist). Evaluate which better describes real research.
- Comte’s optimism ignores that reason can be commodified.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins > Comte; Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent research design)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branching hub. Flag JONAH_TRUST opens the route to Section 32. Good moment to ask whether the game itself mixes positivist and interpretivist methods.
>
> The recap’s closing activity (role-set, agencies of socialisation) draws on a different topic and is not covered by this chapter.

Part 3: Pryor, Positivism and Disinterestedness

Pryor is the positivist in the story. He believes in detached, replicable science and defends it. His scenes test what happens to those principles when his own interests are involved.

Section 9: Dr Aldous Pryor

Leads to: 10 or 12

What happens: *Pryor defends Candour's model as "reliable, replicable" and says value-neutrality means keeping your values out of your method.*

The sociology. Positivism holds that it is possible and desirable to study the social world like the natural world: test hypotheses, quantify, replicate, and stand apart from the behaviour being studied so that values do not influence the data. The chapter distinguishes value-freedom (research uninfluenced by values, arguably impossible) from value-neutrality (recognising where values intrude and limiting or acknowledging them). Coser (1977): choices are always value-relevant; neutrality means making your values explicit so others can challenge them.

How the story dramatises it. Pryor's office sign ("All others must bring data") is the positivist creed. His "reliable, replicable" defence echoes the two qualities of science. His claim that the client's use of a model "isn't a flaw in the science" mirrors the disinterested norm's idea that scientists cannot be held accountable for use. His definition of neutrality is partly right but narrow: it covers method and ignores topic, funding and use.

Evaluation points.

- For Pryor: separating method from use protects science from being censored by whoever dislikes its applications.
- Against: the chapter says values enter at topic choice, funding, method and analysis. Building a risk map is itself a value-relevant choice.
- Campbell's critique of science as the "handmaiden of big business" challenges the idea that scientists can wash their hands of how work is used.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Positivism; Ethos (Disinterested); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
>
> Questions C (8 marks) and D (value-freedom v. value-neutrality, 6 marks). Common error: using the two terms interchangeably. The chapter prefers "value-neutral" because it is not humanly possible to act without values.
>
> Ask: is Pryor describing value-neutrality or a convenient shortened version of it?

Section 10: The Consultancy Contract

Leads to: 12 | Awards: Clue D (The Consultancy Contract)

What happens: *Pryor reveals a personal Thorncastle retainer, declared to the university but not to Hume.*

The sociology. Merton's disinterested norm says scientists may be rewarded for achievement but should not have a personal stake, financial or otherwise, in the success or failure of their research, because this risks researcher bias and makes findings unreliable and invalid. Martinson et al. (2005) found scientists admitting to changing results because of pressure from a study's sponsor.

How the story dramatises it. Pryor has a direct financial interest in his own model being approved as designed. Disclosure to the university satisfies a procedure but not the principle, and Hume (a colleague whose research was involved) was not told. Pryor then defends the stake as realism: disinterest is "unworkable" if you want to keep your house.

Evaluation points.

- Disclosure is not the same as disinterest: declaring a conflict does not remove its influence.

- Pryor's argument echoes the practical criticism that scientists do not behave as a "community of values" (Prelli). Evaluate: does the norm fail, or does the scientist?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested); Postmodernism (practical criticisms)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue D. Supports Question C. The retainer works twice in the plot: it is a Merton breach and a motive. Ask students to explain both functions.

Section 11: The Methodology Memo

Leads to: 13 | Awards: Clue E (The Methodology Memo)

What happens: *Pryor's memo dismisses Halvorsen's fieldwork as "impressions" without engaging with it.*

The sociology. Merton's universal norm says knowledge must be judged by objective, universally agreed criteria, and criticism should target the falsification of conclusions or weaknesses in the process, not the person. Labossiere (1995) calls rejecting work because of an irrelevant fact about its author an ad hominem. Positivists also tend to treat unobservable thoughts as invalid data. Interpretivists reply that qualitative data, although less reliable because it cannot be replicated, has potentially much greater validity.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah spots two layers: Pryor dismissed Halvorsen's evidence because of its kind (qualitative) and because of who produced it. The first is a real methodological disagreement; the second is a breach of universalism.

Evaluation points.

- Pryor's critique has a valid kernel: qualitative data is harder to replicate. But a universal norm requires him to engage with what she found.
- Evaluate: when does a methodological objection become prejudice? The test is whether the content has been addressed.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Universal); Positivism; Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue E. Ask students to find the exact phrase that makes the memo sound methodological while working as a dismissal ("deeply felt").
>
> Reappears in Section 19, where Voss is at risk of making the same mistake with Abara.

Section 12: What Pryor Won't Say

Leads to: 11

What happens: *Pryor says he was marking alone and did not kill anyone over a methodological disagreement.*

The sociology. Merton's sceptical norm says nothing is beyond criticism, but a disagreement about method is not the same as a motive for harm. The chapter's procedural point that an idea may be "not disproven" without being proven applies to alibis: an uncorroborated alibi has not been disproved, but it has not been confirmed either.

How the story dramatises it. Pryor admits the argument was loud but denies it meant anything more. The scene separates a genuine intellectual dispute (positivist against interpretivist) from the evidence needed to show a crime.

Evaluation points.

- A heated method dispute is not evidence of guilt. Equally, an unverified alibi is not evidence of innocence.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Sceptical)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Short transitional scene. The route runs 9, 10, 12, 11, so students read the alibi before the memo. Ask how the order in which we meet evidence affects how we weigh it (a value-relevant decision about analysis).

Section 13: Return

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Jonah reflects that Pryor "really believes" the science is clean even when the money underneath is not.*

The sociology. Coser's dimensions of knowledge include ideational knowledge: beliefs about the nature of knowledge itself shape the methods used. A researcher can sincerely believe in objectivity while their position and interests shape what they see.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah asks whether sincere self-deception is better or worse than lying. This is why Merton's norms are institutional rules rather than personal virtues.

Evaluation points.

- Is sincerity enough? Researcher bias does not require dishonesty, which is why checks such as peer review and disclosure exist.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge (ideational knowledge)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Discussion prompt: "Is a sincere believer in objectivity better or worse than a liar?" Link to Pryor's confession in Section 42.

Part 4: Halvorsen and Interpretivism

Halvorsen did the fieldwork. Her scenes dramatize interpretivist research (close, qualitative, consenting) and what happens when it is repurposed by a quantitative, predictive project.

Section 14: Dr Wren Halvorsen

Leads to: 15 or 17

What happens: *Halvorsen describes eight months in Dockside and learning that her interviews fed a street-by-street map.*

The sociology. Interpretivism ("anti-positivism") argues people are conscious beings who interpret the world, so behaviour must be explained "from within" through empathy and "taking the role of the other". Harris (2005) contrasts positivists treating people like snooker balls with interpretivists who recognise choice and consciousness. Interpretivist research is time-consuming (Venkatesh spent about eight years with the gang he studied) and the needs of the researched matter more than the needs of the researcher.

How the story dramatises it. "Cups of tea in front rooms, kids' names I still remember" is rapport as a research method. Her distress shows what interpretivists value (trust, closeness) turning into a liability when the data leaves her control.

Evaluation points.

- Strength: depth and validity. Limitation: less reliable and replicable, which makes it easy for a positivist to dismiss (as Pryor does).
- Closeness also creates obligations to respondents: promises made in a front room may not survive the data's later journey.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Question C (Halvorsen's fieldwork and validity, 6 marks). Remind students of the chapter's key trade-off: qualitative data is less reliable but potentially more valid.

Section 15: The Fieldwork Notes

Leads to: 16 | Awards: Clue F (Halvorsen's Fieldwork Notes)

What happens: *Halvorsen shows her real notes, not the "sanitised summary" Pryor's model consumed.*

The sociology. Interpretivist research is "goal-free" and emergent: data collection and analysis feed each other and the researcher aims to help the reader understand how people see their world (Firestone, Oberg, Lindauer). Values also enter at analysis, when the researcher decides what to include and exclude. Harris's snooker-ball image describes the opposite approach: people as objects pushed by social forces.

How the story dramatises it. The "real texture" of what people said, in their own words, is the qualitative data that a statistical model strips of meaning. Residents end up treated "as a pattern waiting to misbehave", which is positivist objectification in practice.

Evaluation points.

- What is lost in sanitising? Meaning, context and the residents' own definitions of their situation.
- Ethical question: does consent given for understanding cover use for prediction and policing? Compare the chapter's question about research done on people against their will.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent design; data analysis); The role of values > Research considerations

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue F. Pair with Harris's snooker-ball analogy. Ask: which version of the data is more valid, and which is more useful to a predictive tool? Why do the answers differ?

Section 16: The Fenn Family

Leads to: 17 | Awards: Clue G (The Fenn Family Notes)

What happens: *Halvorsen describes a three-generation Dockside family and nine-year-old Eddie, who sat in on interviews.*

The sociology. Interpretivists see reality as socially constructed through individual and collective definitions of the situation (Firestone). Durkheim links in too: a family on the same street for three generations, with a grandmother who remembers when half the street worked the yards, shows kin-based and work-based ties that industrial decline has weakened. Stephens' analysis of means-testing shows that policies can have intended and unintended consequences.

How the story dramatises it. Eddie is a human face for the data: a curious child who unknowingly becomes a data point in a model flagging streets like his as "risk". Halvorsen's hope that this will not follow him "for the rest of his life" anticipates the unintended consequences of a prediction.

Evaluation points.

- Evaluate risk scoring: it may intend to target help or resources, but can stigmatise (compare Stephens on unintended consequences).
- Is it fair to judge a place by the aggregate statistics of its residents?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Interpretivism; Origins > Durkheim; The uses of sociological knowledge (social policy)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue G. Supports Question E. Optional stretch to labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy from the deviance topic (not covered in this chapter).

Section 17: What Halvorsen Knows

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Halvorsen has no alibi but conscience, and asks Voss not to confuse "late" with "guilty".*

The sociology. Interpretivist evaluation is generally non-judgemental: the aim is to help the reader understand how people see their situation. A detective, by contrast, has to reach a verdict. Coser's value-neutrality asks researchers to acknowledge their values openly rather than pretend to have none.

How the story dramatises it. Halvorsen asks Voss to understand Hume's late change of heart without condemning it. This is an interpretivist request addressed to someone who must make a judgement.

Evaluation points.

- Understanding a person's journey is not the same as excusing it. A plea for understanding cannot by itself prove innocence.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (evaluation); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Transitional. Good discussion: where does a sociologist's job end and a detective's begin?

Part 5: Abara and Postmodernism

Abara argues that "ethical, value-free research" is just another story. Her scenes test both the power and the weakness of the postmodernist position.

Section 18: Dr Corinne Abara

Leads to: 19 or 20

What happens: *Abara's draft paper argues "ethical research" is a metanarrative, and that Candour is simply honest about whose interests research serves.*

The sociology. Postmodernism is not a scientific methodology but a critical worldview: people construct stories (narratives) to make sense of the world, and societies construct metanarratives (religion, political philosophies, nationality, science). Lyotard (1979) describes postmodern societies as marked by "incredulity towards metanarratives". Postmodernists examine science as a metanarrative struggling for dominance, and argue that truth is shaped by whoever holds the power to set the criteria. The chapter stresses that postmodernism is not "anti-science".

How the story dramatises it. Abara states the postmodernist position cleanly and applies it directly to research ethics: ethics is one more grand story. Her paper's title shows how the story's characters carry the chapter's vocabulary.

Evaluation points.

- Strength: draws attention to how funders and power shape findings (Martinson; Campbell) and to the limits of objectivity (Polanyi).
- Limitation: if all truth is relative, Candour cannot be condemned, so the argument undermines its own moral force.
- Evaluate: does recognising that research serves interests mean it should stop trying to be objective?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Postmodernism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Question D (evaluate Abara, 8 marks). Common error: equating postmodernism with "anything goes". The chapter says it is a critique of how knowledge claims work, not a rejection of science.

Section 19: The Cynical Paper

Leads to: 20 | Awards: Clue H (Abara's Journal Draft)

What happens: *Abara's promotion shortlist coincides with Candour's sign-off. She asks Voss to separate "the appearance from the argument".*

The sociology. Practical postmodernist criticisms include Campbell's "handmaiden of big business" and Martinson et al.'s finding about changing results under sponsor pressure. Abara is right that others have noticed funders shaping findings. But Merton's universal norm also says arguments should be judged on their merits, not on who makes them, and Labossiere calls rejecting an argument because of its author an ad hominem.

How the story dramatises it. Abara's theory is genuinely held and also convenient: it excuses her from objecting to a project her promotion depends on. Her demand to separate argument from arguer is logically sound.

Evaluation points.

- A conflict of interest is real, but it does not by itself refute the argument. To reject the argument because of who she is would repeat Pryor's error in Section 11.
- The ideal evaluation: judge the argument on its merits, and judge her motives separately.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Postmodernism (practical criticisms); Ethos (Universal)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue H. Excellent for evaluation: is Voss at risk of committing the same error Pryor committed with Halvorsen?

Section 20: What Abara Knows

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Abara has a conference alibi, and admits she thinks Hume was right and she used a clever theory to avoid saying so.*

The sociology. Coser's value-neutrality asks researchers to state their values openly so others can challenge them. Postmodern relativism claims all truths are versions shaped by power.

How the story dramatises it. Abara ends by stating her own position honestly, which is an act of Coser-style value-neutrality. The scene suggests a theory can be both intellectually serious and a refuge from responsibility.

Evaluation points.

- Her own admission undercuts her paper: even a postmodernist accepts that some claims (Hume was right) are better than others.
- Evaluate: does postmodern scepticism dissolve personal moral responsibility?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Postmodernism; The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> The teacher key's indicative content for Question D explicitly cites this scene ("Hume was right"). Make sure students can use it as evidence.

Part 6: Ashby, Funding and Institutional Values

The Vice-Chancellor is not a villain but a manager of dependence. Her scenes show how funding shapes what research gets done, and how persuasion can work more smoothly than force.

Section 21: Professor Marguerite Ashby

Leads to: 22

What happens: *Ashby admits Hume's lecture alarmed her because it called a lucrative partnership a betrayal of sociology.*

The sociology. The chapter says funding influences both what is studied and how, and raises the question of researcher accountability (Project Camelot). Marx adds that power comes from economic ownership, and that those who control economic resources are powerful across areas of society, education included.

How the story dramatises it. Ashby's honesty is the point: she does not pretend the money is neutral. The institution's interest in a quiet outcome is wider than one professor's conscience.

Evaluation points.

- Structure or individual? Ashby can be read as someone constrained by funding dependence (a Marxist reading) or as someone choosing to protect her institution.
- Counter-view: funders are one influence among many, and universities also have academic commitments.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Research considerations; Origins > Marx

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Supports Question E. Ask students to distinguish a structural pressure (the funding model) from a specific act (what someone did).

Section 22: The Funding Figures

Leads to: 23 | Awards: Clue I (The Funding Figures)

What happens: *Thorncastle's money also underwrites two lectureships, a PhD scholarship fund and part of a building refurbishment.*

The sociology. Funding affects topic choice and raises accountability questions. The chapter's discussion of social policy introduces intended and unintended consequences: actions can have effects their authors did not aim at.

How the story dramatises it. Ashby's argument ("real people lose real jobs") is a real moral claim. The clue shows that the university's interest in a quiet resolution is built into its finances.

Evaluation points.

- Evaluate: integrity against institutional survival. Is a compromised funding model better than no funding?
- Merton's disinterested norm applies at the level of individual scientists; this scene shows an institution with a stake.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Research considerations; The uses of sociological knowledge (social policy)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue I. Supports Question E. Note that Section 24 confirms the figures are accurate, so this is a real dilemma, not a bluff.

Section 23: The Tenure Offer

Leads to: 45 or 24 | Awards: Clue J (The Tenure Letter)

What happens: *Ashby offers Voss a permanent Chair if this "unfortunate business" ends quietly. She can accept or decline.*

The sociology. Marx argued order is maintained through a mixture of force (violence, imprisonment) and persuasion. Persuasion works by offering incentives that make compliance feel rational. Merton's disinterested norm says researchers should have no personal stake in outcomes; the offer deliberately creates one.

How the story dramatises it. Ashby does not bribe: she reaches for a letter, not a chequebook, and insists "it's not a bribe". Voss's answer (a cage with better furniture) rejects the incentive.

Evaluation points.

- Persuasion can be more effective than force because it enlists the target's own self-interest.
- Evaluate the choice: security against integrity. The branch shows that accepting leads to a quiet, comfortable ending and declining leads to further inquiry.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins > Marx; Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue J. Choosing to accept leads to 46, Ending 2. Ask how the offer applies Marx's force-and-persuasion idea to a university setting.

Section 24: Confirming the Figures

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Jonah confirms Ashby's figures. Voss concludes Ashby is protecting a funding model, not a murder.*

The sociology. Checking claims, even from a suspect source, is the sceptical norm applied evenly. The scene also separates two kinds of explanation: a structural motive (financial dependence) and a specific, documented act.

How the story dramatises it. Voss accepts the figures are real but does not treat them as proof of anything more. This distinction returns when she builds the case against Pryor.

Evaluation points.

- Motive is not evidence. A structure that creates incentives does not show who acted on them.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Sceptical); Procedures

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Seeds the structure-and-action argument that returns in Section 41.

Part 7: Lyle and the Uses of Sociological Knowledge

Lyle makes the commercial use of knowledge explicit. These scenes are a case study in what the chapter calls the uses of sociological knowledge, and in how far a producer controls what happens to it.

Section 25: Conrad Lyle

Leads to: 26

What happens: *Lyle calls Candour a "community cohesion research partnership" that is compliant with every existing regulation.*

The sociology. Campbell (1996) describes science as potentially "the handmaiden of big business". The chapter also uses Project Camelot (Solovey 2001) as an example of funded research that is at best ethically questionable even if allowed.

How the story dramatises it. Lyle's defence is that compliance and discomfort are different from wrongdoing. Compliance with regulation answers a legal question, not an ethical one.

Evaluation points.

- Lyle has a point: universities accept this kind of money readily. But legality does not answer the ethical question raised by the use of community data.
- Compare Ashby (who defends the arrangement quietly) and Lyle (who says it aloud).

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Postmodernism (practical criticisms); The role of values > Research considerations

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Supports Question E. Useful comparison: Ashby and Lyle make the same argument in different registers.

Section 26: The Pitch Deck

Leads to: 27 | Awards: Clue K (The Pitch Deck)

What happens: *The deck markets Candour as "predictive community risk scoring" to police and local authorities.*

The sociology. Positivist research aims to quantify and predict. The chapter describes sociology's uses in policy: research can highlight issues (Townsend and Abel-Smith's poverty research), change how issues are defined and measured, and be tested through evaluation of intended and unintended consequences. It also describes deviancy amplification (Wilkins), where minor deviance can be turned into a bigger social problem. Marx adds that those with economic power use institutions to manage others.

How the story dramatises it. Candour was never purely academic: community trust data has become a product. Sociological knowledge here serves surveillance and social control, not reform.

Evaluation points.

- Contrast Townsend and Abel-Smith, whose research redefined poverty and prompted policy to reduce it, with Candour, which uses the same discipline to target communities. Knowledge is not inherently progressive.
- Evaluate: can producers keep control over how their research is used once it exists?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The uses of sociological knowledge; Sociology as a science > Positivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue K. Core evidence for Question E (is knowledge ever fully under its producers' control, 8 marks). Indicative content links this to Campbell's critique.
>
> Question B (Marx): this scene and Section 6 are the strongest evidence for a conflict reading.

Section 27: What Lyle Won't Say

Leads to: 8

What happens: *Lyle has a board-meeting alibi. He says he needed Hume "persuadable", not dead.*

The sociology. Influence through persuasion, not force, is a Marxist idea in the chapter, and funding's effect on research is covered under values in research.

How the story dramatises it. Lyle says plainly what funders want: influence over findings. His alibi (six witnesses) and his logic make him a red herring.

Evaluation points.

- Distinguish motive (reasons to want something) from opportunity (the chance to act). Lyle has motive, but not opportunity.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins > Marx; The role of values > Research considerations

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Helps students separate those with a stake from those with a plausible role in the death.

Part 8: Jonah and Whose Evidence Counts

Jonah's scenes turn research methods into choices about people. How Voss asks questions decides what she hears, and who gets to count as a source of data.

Section 28: Jonah Pike

Leads to: 29 or 31

What happens: *Jonah pre-empts suspicion: "Ask me where I was." Voss can sit and listen, or ask directly.*

The sociology. The chapter says choice of method is value-laden: researchers decide who to question, what to ask and how respondents may answer. Positivists tend to prefer closed-ended questions that are easier to quantify; interpretivists let respondents answer "in their own words" with open-ended questions.

How the story dramatises it. The two options are a closed and an open approach. "Ask directly" gets a precise answer and nothing more. "Sit down" lets Jonah say what matters.

Evaluation points.

- Closed questions are more comparable and reliable but can miss what the respondent knows. Open questions have greater validity but are time-consuming.
- Voss's choice shows researcher values (her assumptions about Jonah) shaping the data.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Research considerations (choice of method); Positivism; Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> A strong methods-in-action scene. The route choices set flags: JONAH_TRUST (Section 30) or JONAH_DISMISSED (Section 31).

Section 29: The Test

Leads to: 30

What happens: *Jonah talks about his summer: unlabelled spreadsheet columns and saying nothing. He says Hume was the only one who asked what he thought the data showed.*

The sociology. Interpretivists involve respondents in the research process: they may suggest ideas and issues the researcher had not considered. Collecting as much information as possible, because usefulness cannot be judged at the start, is part of the emergent design. Hume treated Jonah as a participant, not an instrument.

How the story dramatises it. By sitting and listening, Voss gets the summer story, which contains the real evidence. The scene's title suggests it is Voss's methods that are being tested.

Evaluation points.

- Strength: richer, more valid information. Limitation: time-consuming and harder to compare or replicate (the chapter notes Venkatesh's eight years).

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Interpretivism (emergent design; data collection)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Link to Hume's own method: he asked a junior what the data showed. Discuss whether that was good research practice or good management, or both.

Section 30: What Jonah Knows

Leads to: 8 | Awards: Clue M (Jonah's Private Log); Flag JONAH_TRUST

What happens: *Jonah shows his private log of every time he was told not to record something, and the Monday he saw Pryor borrow Hume's spare key.*

The sociology. Values enter research at the point of analysis, when researchers decide what to include and exclude. Jonah's log records exactly those decisions. His observation of Pryor with a key is a piece of data that must be cross-checked. The chapter's example of cross-checking reliability is asking the same question in different ways.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah's unofficial record is a parallel dataset that documents what the official record leaves out. It will need corroboration, which arrives in Section 33.

Evaluation points.

- A contemporaneous log is a strong source, but it is one person's account until it is checked against something independent.
- The instruction not to record something is itself a piece of evidence about how data is shaped.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Research considerations (analysis); Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue M and the JONAH_TRUST flag. Clues L and M are the two pieces of evidence indicative content uses for the "facts don't speak for themselves" question (10 marks): what counts as data is a series of decisions.

Section 31: Dismissed

Leads to: 8 | Awards: Flag JONAH_DISMISSED

What happens: *Voss asks directly. Jonah answers precisely what was asked and withholds the rest.*

The sociology. Postmodernists argue the act of research changes the behaviour being studied. The positivist ideal of standing apart cannot survive a questioner whose manner shapes the answers. The chapter notes researcher choices about what to ask and how respondents may answer.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah recognises he has been judged before being heard, and so he does not mention Pryor or his log. The flag does not change the route, but it means Voss does not get Clue M.

Evaluation points.

- The same witness gives different information depending on how he is asked, which undermines the positivist claim that a researcher can stand apart.
- Counter: structured questions are more replicable, but the cost here is missing evidence.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Postmodernism; Positivism; Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Per the teacher key, JONAH_DISMISSED does not change the route, but it blocks Section 30 (and so Clue M). Links forward to labelling and to Ending 1, where the pattern repeats.

Section 32: Jonah's Errand

Leads to: 33

What happens: *With Voss's trust, Jonah checks the archive server's access logs.*

The sociology. Reliability depends on being able to check results. Here a human account (Jonah's log) is checked against an independent, machine-generated record.

How the story dramatises it. Voss gives Jonah responsibility for part of the investigation. The task takes a day, passwords and a patient IT officer.

Evaluation points.

- Combining sources strengthens a claim, but each source still has limits.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Only available with JONAH_TRUST from Section 8.

Section 33: What Jonah Found

Leads to: 8 | Awards: Clue N (The Access Logs)

What happens: *Pryor's login accessed the medical cabinet record on Monday and edited candour_model_v9_FINAL for six minutes on the night Hume died.*

The sociology. Reliability is consistency; validity is whether data measures what it claims. The chapter's example is crime statistics: they may be reliable but only record reported crimes. Martinson et al. found scientists changing results under sponsor pressure, and editing a model file the night a critic died would fit that pattern.

How the story dramatises it. The logs connect method (medical cabinet) and motive (editing the model) to one login. They are highly reliable records.

Evaluation points.

- Do the logs measure what we want to claim? They show a login was used, not who was at the keyboard or what was done. This is why Section 49's solicitor can say they prove presence, not poison.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Defining science (reliability and validity); Postmodernism (practical criticisms)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue N. A neat reliability-versus-validity application, and it sets up the courtroom argument in Sections 49 and 50.

Part 9: Gathering the Case

Voss now has to decide how much evidence is enough and how to present it. These scenes mirror the positivist and interpretivist styles of making a case.

Section 34: The Case Board, Again

Leads to: 36 or 35

What happens: *Voss counts her clues: eight or more lets her gather everyone; seven or fewer means it is too soon.*

The sociology. Positivism aims to quantify and measure. The clue threshold is a quantitative criterion for sufficiency. The chapter's point about values entering research includes decisions about what data to include and what to exclude.

How the story dramatises it. The game turns the evidential question into a number. Any threshold is a decision, not a fact of nature.

Evaluation points.

- Counting treats every clue as equal. Halvorsen's rich notes and a single login count the same, which hides differences in weight and quality.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Positivism; The role of values > Research considerations

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branch: eight or more clues leads to 37; seven or fewer to 36. A useful quantity-versus-quality discussion. The recap's "realist synthesis" label is not in the textbook, so use structure-and-action language if students need a frame.

Section 35: Too Soon

Leads to: 8 or 36

What happens: *Voss says "a pattern" is not a case. She can gather more evidence or bluff.*

The sociology. Scientific knowledge is tested against evidence and not disproven. Anything short of that is an untested explanation. The chapter's ethical knowledge requires researchers not to falsify or overstate findings.

How the story dramatises it. Voss separates a pattern from proof, then is offered the option of bluffing.

Evaluation points.

- Bluffing trades evidential integrity for pressure. Evaluate whether it breaks the scientific ethos or is simply acceptable in an investigation.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Procedures; The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge (ethical knowledge)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Both options can lead to the Grand Lantern, but the bluff skips gathering evidence and risks the wobble in Section 50.

Section 36: The Grand Lantern

Leads to: 37 | Awards: Clue O (The Finished Manuscript)

What happens: *The suspects gather in the theatre. Hume's cloud account holds a finished draft of the lecture, backed up three days before his death.*

The sociology. Merton's communal norm says knowledge is public and must be open to peer review. Coser says researchers should state their values so others can question them. The manuscript names names, including Hume's own complicity.

How the story dramatises it. The room acts as a public tribunal. The finished manuscript changes the meaning of Clue C: it is not a confession cut short but a completed argument.

Evaluation points.

- Evidence changes meaning with context and completeness. The same draft title means one thing alone on a desk and another with the full text beside it.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Clue O. Links to Question D (value-freedom v. value-neutrality). Ask how the manuscript demonstrates neutrality in practice.

Section 37: Which Case to Make

Leads to: 38 or 39

What happens: *Jonah asks: open with the evidence, or with what Hume believed?*

The sociology. The chapter contrasts positivism, which explains behaviour "from without", with interpretivism, which explains it "from within" through the meanings people give. Coser's ideational knowledge also matters: what you believe about knowledge shapes the method you choose.

How the story dramatises it. The choice is between how it happened (evidence) and what it meant (Hume's own words).

Evaluation points.

- Neither alone is complete. Evidence tells us how; meaning tells us why.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Positivism; Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Both options set notebook-only flags (EVIDENCE_FIRST or NEUTRALITY_FIRST). Ask students to defend one opening and say what the other would add.

Section 38: Evidence First

Leads to: 40 | Awards: Flag EVIDENCE_FIRST

What happens: *Voss lays out contract, memo and logs, in sequence.*

The sociology. A positivist presentation leads with objective, checkable data. Voss notes the room understands "the shape of the case before feeling its weight".

How the story dramatises it. She says "this is how it happened", and "what it meant" is "a longer conversation".

Evaluation points.

- Strength: persuasive and checkable. Limitation: it explains behaviour from outside and may miss meaning (Harris's critique of treating people as objects).

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Positivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Short scene. Flag is recorded in the notebook only and does not change the route.

Section 39: Hume's Own Words

Leads to: 40 | Awards: Flag NEUTRALITY_FIRST

What happens: *Voss reads from the manuscript: someone always decides which facts get collected, and why, and who gets to use them.*

The sociology. This sentence compresses the chapter's account of values: they enter at topic choice, funding, method and analysis, and affect the uses of knowledge. It is also close to Coser's view that choice is always value-relevant.

How the story dramatises it. Hume's own voice finally says what he had avoided. The silence in the room is "heavier, more personal".

Evaluation points.

- A personal confession is persuasive but subjective. It earns credibility by naming Hume's own complicity, which is part of what makes it a declaration of values, not a pretence of having none.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values; Dimensions of knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> This is effectively the answer to Question E (10 marks). Invite students to find the three or four decision points the line implies (what is collected, why, who uses it).

Section 40: The Accusation

Leads to: 41 or 44

What happens: *Voss must accuse someone: Pryor or Jonah.*

The sociology. An accusation is a hypothesis that must survive testing against evidence. Merton's universal norm says claims should be judged by objective criteria, not by the status of the person involved.

How the story dramatises it. The evidence points one way. The easy, convenient way points to the least powerful person in the room.

Evaluation points.

- Choosing Jonah would reflect position, not evidence.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Universal)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branch: Jonah leads to Ending 1; Pryor to Section 41.

Part 10: The Case Against Pryor and the Six Endings

The last group of sections tests whether Voss's evidence holds, and each ending shows a different outcome of the question the story has been asking: what happens to knowledge, and to the people who produce it, when convenience beats scrutiny?

Section 41: The Case Against Pryor

Leads to: 42 or 50

What happens: *Voss presents the contract, memo, logs and manuscript. Five or more of clues D, E, K, M, N, O and the case holds.*

The sociology. The chapter presents three broad ways of explaining social behaviour: consensus, conflict and action. The case here combines structure (funding dependence, institutional comfort) with action (Pryor's purposeful choices, in Weber's sense of individuals acting to bring about change).

How the story dramatises it. A structural motive and a documented act come together. The threshold is a quantitative rule for deciding the case.

Evaluation points.

- A motive structure explains why someone might act; only documented acts show that they did.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Origins > Weber; Sociology as a science > Procedures

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branch: five or more clues leads to 43; four or fewer to 52. The recap calls this "realist synthesis", which the textbook does not use. Frame it as structure plus action.

Section 42: The Confrontation

Leads to: 43

What happens: *Pryor confesses he altered Hume's dose to buy time, not to kill.*

The sociology. Merton's disinterested norm failed. Pryor's admission that he "stopped being able to tell sound science from convenient science" shows value-freedom collapsing. The chapter also discusses intended and unintended consequences: an act aimed at delay led to death.

How the story dramatises it. Pryor's defence of detachment ends as a confession about his own stake.

Evaluation points.

- Evaluate Pryor's account: structural pressure explains but does not excuse, and the belief that his science was sound may itself have been self-deception.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Disinterested); Positivism; The role of values

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Supports Questions C and D. Ask what the confession shows about the limits of the positivist claim to "stand apart" (Question C, 8 marks).

Section 43: The Choice

Leads to: 48 (with JONAH_TRUST) or 47

What happens: *Rook arrests Pryor. Voss can let the arrest be the end, or ensure the manuscript is read aloud.*

The sociology. The communal norm says knowledge must be shared, not left in private hands. The chapter says sociology informs public debate through awareness-raising.

How the story dramatises it. An arrest closes the legal case; a public reading opens the sociological one.

Evaluation points.

- Two kinds of justice: a legal outcome and public accountability. Which is more likely to change how knowledge is used?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The uses of sociological knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branch: JONAH_TRUST unlocks the fuller ending (Section 48). Without it, or if the player chooses simplicity, play ends at Section 47.

Section 44: The Easiest Name

Leads to: Ending 1 of 6 | Awards: Ending: The Easiest Name

What happens: *Voss accuses Jonah. There is no real evidence, and he leaves.*

The sociology. Merton's universal norm and Labossiere's ad hominem point both warn against judging by irrelevant facts about the person, such as age or status. Postmodernists argue those with power decide which version counts as true.

How the story dramatises it. The reflex to suspect the least protected person first. The story's own sociological note says the series will examine this mechanism case by case.

Evaluation points.

- The ending shows universalism failing in criminal justice as well as in science. Evaluate whether institutions tend to reach for the least powerful.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Universal); Postmodernism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Section 40. Foreshadows later cases on labelling and deviance, topics outside this chapter.

Section 45: The Road Not Taken

Leads to: Ending 2 of 6 | Awards: Ending: The Road Not Taken

What happens: *Voss declines to ask or accepts Ashby's letter. The verdict stands, Candour renews, and her conviction curdles.*

The sociology. Merton's sceptical norm abandoned: nothing is challenged, so nothing changes. Marx's persuasion idea: an incentive secures compliance without force.

How the story dramatises it. Voss gets a Chair and a career whose conviction becomes "performance".

Evaluation points.

- Declining to ask a hard question does not make the question disappear. Someone else must ask it with less context.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Sceptical); Origins > Marx

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Sections 3 and 23. Two different routes (declining to investigate; accepting a reward) lead to one ending. Ask students to compare them.

Section 46: A Heart Is a Heart

Leads to: Ending 3 of 6 | Awards: Ending: A Heart Is a Heart

What happens: *Voss accepts the verdict. Candour renews and a predictive product is piloted.*

The sociology. Scientific knowledge must be tested and not disproven. An explanation accepted without testing may be convenient but has no scientific status. Candour's knowledge continues to circulate without accountability.

How the story dramatises it. Jonah later asks whether a heart giving out is "a very convenient kind of explanation".

Evaluation points.

- The problem is not that the verdict is certainly wrong but that it was never tested.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Procedures; Ethos (Communal)

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Section 4.

Section 47: Arrest, Quietly

Leads to: Ending 4 of 6 | Awards: Ending: Arrest, Quietly

What happens: *Pryor is convicted of manslaughter. Candour winds down quietly and Hume's manuscript is filed in the archive.*

The sociology. The communal norm requires knowledge to be public. A document filed where almost nobody looks is technically public but practically inaccessible. The chapter says sociological knowledge affects society through public debate.

How the story dramatises it. The culprit is caught but the exposure Hume planned never happens.

Evaluation points.

- Compare formal publicity (available on request) with effective publicity (heard by those affected).

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Ethos (Communal); The uses of sociological knowledge

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Section 43 without JONAH_TRUST, or if the player chooses to keep it simple.

Section 48: This Sociological Life

Leads to: Ending 5 of 6 | Awards: Ending: This Sociological Life

What happens: *Voss reads Hume's full manuscript aloud. Candour ends, Thorncastle is exposed, and Voss Social Investigations is founded.*

The sociology. Coser's value-neutrality: researchers should state their values so they can be questioned. Merton's communal and sceptical norms are restored. Weber's social action: small groups acting purposefully can initiate change.

How the story dramatises it. The title and the story's sociological note make the point: neutrality is achieved by declaring values, not hiding them.

Evaluation points.

- Strength: transparency restores accountability. Limitation: it happens after the fact and after a death.
- Indicative content links to a counter-view: transparency can partially restore accountability even after misuse.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > The role of values > Dimensions of knowledge; Origins > Weber

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Section 43 with JONAH_TRUST. Links to Question D (6 marks), Question E (counter-view) and Question B (charismatic authority, 4 marks): the key suggests Hume's posthumous influence.

Section 49: Reasonable Doubt

Leads to: Ending 6 of 6 | Awards: Ending: Reasonable Doubt

What happens: *Pryor leaves with his solicitor. Voss has no solid proof. Candour renews.*

The sociology. The chapter says factual knowledge is backed by evidence that has been systematically created and tested. A pattern is not proof. The logs, as in Section 33, are reliable but may not be valid evidence of the specific act.

How the story dramatises it. "Being right and being able to prove it" are not the same problem.

Evaluation points.

- Rigour protects the innocent but can also let the powerful escape. This is a cost of the sceptical norm.

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Defining science; Procedures

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Reached from Section 50.

Section 50: The Wobble

Leads to: 42 or 49

What happens: *Pryor's solicitor calls the evidence circumstantial. Voss can press on if she holds clue O and two of D, K, N.*

The sociology. The solicitor's points rely on validity (logs prove presence, not poison). The manuscript supplies context that turns a pattern into a purposeful account.

How the story dramatizes it. One qualitative document plus two others can outweigh a bare count.

Evaluation points.

- The rule treats evidence unequally, which contradicts simple clue-counting. Which is a better model of proof?

Textbook: The Sociological Perspective > Sociology as a science > Defining science (validity); Interpretivism

> **TEACHER NOTE**
> Branch: clue O and two of D, K, N leads to 43; otherwise 51.

Comprehension questions: where to find the evidence

The casefile's recap questions (A to E) and the sections that give the strongest evidence for each, based on the teacher key's indicative content and the scenes above.

Comprehension question	Marks	Best evidence in sections
A. Why Ritzer and Sugarman insist sociology produces factual knowledge	6	1, 2
A. Comte's three stages: a science of society possible and necessary	6	1, 8
B. Marx: order based on conflict, using evidence from the case	6	6, 23, 26
B. Durkheim's social solidarity and Hume's specialism	6	4, 16
B. Weber's charismatic authority applied to a character	4	36, 48
C. Merton's ethos: two ways Candour fails	6	6, 10, 11
C. Positivist claim that a researcher can "stand apart" (Pryor)	8	5, 9, 10, 31, 42
C. Halvorsen's fieldwork and interpretivist validity	6	11, 14, 15
D. Evaluate Abara: ethics as "a metanarrative like any other"	8	18, 19, 20
D. Value-freedom v. value-neutrality (Hume's journey)	6	9, 36, 39, 48
E. Knowledge never fully under its producers' control	8	22, 25, 26, 48
E. "Facts don't speak for themselves…": discuss	10	5, 16, 30, 39

The Textbook

THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

SOCIOLOGY AS A REASONED AND RIGOROUS STUDY OF SOCIAL LIFE

Sociology is the study of social behaviour that looks at how membership of social groups - from families through schools to workplaces - impacts on and influences people's behaviour. More specifically, Ritzer (1979) suggests "Sociologists study the interrelationships between individuals, organisations, cultures and societies", something that for Sugarman (1968) involves "the *objective* study of human behaviour"; sociologists, in other words, create factual knowledge about how and why people behave in particular ways. Facts, as opposed to opinions, are *true*, regardless of whether we want or *believe* them to be true; opinions, however, may or may not be true - and the crucial difference is that factual knowledge is backed by evidence that has been systematically and objectively created and tested - ideas examined in more detail below.

Sociologists aren't, however, interested in facts for their own sake; rather, they're interested in how facts are *created* - how sociologists produce knowledge that is superior to simple opinion - and *linked*; how one fact links to another to produce an overall picture of what we can loosely call "social reality". This involves developing theories that explain how and why things in the social world are connected; we can only explain facts by constructing possible explanations (theories) and then testing our theory against other, known, facts. It's a fact, for example, that people around the world live in family groups - but while this is an interesting observation, what's more interesting to sociologists is why this behaviour occurs in every human society. Sociology, therefore, is about trying to understand the social world - and while this is probably something people have always tried to do, they didn't study it *sociologically* until around 200 years ago.

Origins

The end of the 17th century was notable in Europe for great cultural upheavals, as intellectuals and scientists, such as Newton (1643–1727) began to question the prevailing view of the world based on religious faith, magical superstition, custom and tradition. The Enlightenment marked the first concerted attempt to challenge these beliefs through reason and science; social development - from the darkness of a superstitious past to the illumination of a reasoned future - could be advanced through scientific knowledge. Alongside these cultural challenges to the established religious and academic order, the French Revolution (1789) provided a strong political challenge - the absolute Monarchy that ruled one of the most powerful nations in the world was swept away on a tide of Republican fervour and the old aristocratic rulers were either killed or exiled. A third element added to the mix was the economic changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution and the development of factories and machine-based production processes that began around the middle of the 17th century in Britain and parts of Europe.

Comte

It was against this background of change that the French philosopher and mathematician Auguste Comte (1798-1857) developed two ideas, the first focused on one of the enduring questions in sociology - how is social order created and maintained? - while the second focused on a scientific method (positivism) through which we could discover what Comte believed were the laws governing social development. In this respect Comte (1830) argued all human societies passed through three stages:

- The theological, where order was based on religious beliefs and controls.
- The metaphysical - a "transition phase" characterised by upheaval and disorder, where the old religious order was challenged by the emergence of science.
- The positive - the stage where science and reason reveal the nature of the social world and replaces religion as the basis for social order.

Comte argued the means through which the scientific basis of social order could be revealed was through a new science of social development he called *La Sociologie* (*Sociology)*; this was based on the "positivist" principles (see below) that had been successfully applied by natural sciences, such as physics and chemistry, to understand development in the natural world.

Marx

While Comte adopted a consensus perspective that stressed social order was created and maintained through co-operation, his contemporary, the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx (1818-1883), approached the question of order differently. For Marx, order was not created and maintained by co-operation but by conflict. He argued social development had passed through four epochs or time periods:

- Primitive communism
- Ancient society
- Feudal, or pre-industrial, society
- Capitalist or industrial society.

Each time period was characterised by different types of economic relationship. In feudal society the relationship was between lord and peasant while under capitalism it was between owners/employer and non-owner/employee. These relationships, he argued, were always based on conflict based on relations of domination and subordination; one group always exploited other groups to enhance their own economic interests. In capitalist societies, for example, the dominant group was the bourgeoisie, those who owned the means of economic production (such as land, factories and machines), while the proletariat, the vast majority, owned nothing but their ability to work (their labour power) in exchange for money.

Marx, therefore, introduced a range of ideas that remain significant in contemporary sociology, not the least being class conflict between the bourgeois class and the proletarian, or working, class. He also argued order is maintained through a mixture of force - controlling people with violence, imprisonment or even death - and persuasion (or socialisation - see below); people could, for example, be convinced about the need to maintain orderly behaviour through the power of religious teachings, such as the idea that each person's place in the world, whether rich or poor, was specified by a higher being whose intentions could not be disputed.

Another significant idea that flows from class conflict is class inequality - the idea that in capitalist societies one small group own most of the wealth while the vast majority own little or nothing. This idea has re-emerged recently in the various Occupy Movements around the world, where the wealth and power of "the top 1%" is contrasted with that of the "bottom 99%". This particular movement involved protests against social and economic inequality in countries around the globe - from America to Hong Kong, Mexico and Nigeria. This, in turn, gives us the idea of class stratification - different social classes ranked hierarchically (one on top of the other) in terms of their wealth, power and influence. Power is, in this respect, a very significant concept and, for Marx, power came from economic ownership. Those who controlled economic resources were also powerful across all areas of society, from politics through religion to the media.

Weber

A third major theorist in the historical development of sociology is the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) who, like many of his contemporaries, was concerned with social change and, most importantly, how societies modernised. Weberian theory examined how pre-industrial societies based around agricultural production and labour, powerful feudal lords and a relatively powerless peasantry, developed into industrial societies based around manufacturing and various forms of political democracy.

Marx explained this change through class conflict - the proletariat battling with the bourgeoisie and eventually, through revolutionary class action, overthrowing their oppressors and establishing an advanced form of communism based on a dictatorship of the proletariat. Weber (1905), by contrast, developed different ideas about how social change came about. He argued social development, once started, followed a process of modernisation, features of which included industrialisation, urbanisation and rationalisation (behaviour and social organisation based on bureaucratic scientific principles) - but there had to be something that kick-started this process because change was not inevitable.

Weber (1922) developed a theory of social action - one that sits alongside ‘consensus’ and ‘conflict’ theories as three of the major sociological perspectives (see below). It argues social change is the result of individuals and groups acting purposefully to bring about such change. In some instances change is created by charismatic leaders - people who influence others through the power of their personality; individuals such as Jesus Christ (Christianity) or Mohammad (Islam) founded great world religions while, in the 20th century we could point to charismatic political leaders like Hitler or Ghandi. More-usually, change is initiated by small religious or political groups; Weber, for example, highlighted the role of the Calvinist (Protestant) religion (see below) in providing the ideas and practices that allowed industrial forms of economic production to

develop and flourish in the late-17th century and, by so doing, lay the foundations for the Industrial Revolution.

Durkheim

The final theorist to note here is the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1857 - 1917) who followed in the general consensus tradition established by Comte - although unlike the latter Durkheim's work and ideas remain an influential force in the theory and practice of sociology to this day, for two reasons:

Firstly, Durkheim saw societies as social systems that could only be fully understood in terms of the relationship between their various institutions. These are patterns of shared, stable, behaviour that persist over time, such as families, the workplace, religion, education and politics. One such relationship, for example, is how and why was the family connected to the workplace? He wanted to resolve a fundamental problem for all forms of sociological analysis, namely, what is the "social glue" that holds a mass of individuals together as a society? His answer was to see social systems as "moral entities"; something to which people feel they belong and to which they owe allegiance.

In this respect, society took on the appearance of something that existed in its own right, over and above the ideas, hopes and desires of its individual members. Order was based on value consensus - agreement about the things a society, and by extension every individual in that society, thinks are important. For Durkheim (1895), therefore, societies didn't just "exist"; people had to develop social solidarity, a belief they belonged to a larger group, that took one of two forms:

- In pre-modern or traditional societies, mechanical solidarity prevails - people are bound together by who they *are* - part of a family or some other kinship group such as a clan, for example.

- In modern societies organic solidarity predominates; people are bound together by what they *do*, such as paid work. This type of solidarity, while allowing the formation of much larger groups than its mechanical counterpart, is more-complicated to create and so requires integrating mechanisms - ways of making unrelated people feel they have things in common, such as a shared belief in democracy or pledging allegiance to a common flag that symbolises the society to which they belong.

Secondly, Durkheim (1895) made a significant contribution to the development of sociology as a science by showing sociologists could both produce objective knowledge about social behaviour - facts that prove or disprove certain arguments - and explain behaviour as the result of something more than just the simple psychological choices made by individuals. In this respect Durkheim (1897) set-out the basic principles through which human behaviour could be scientifically studied and applied these rules to the study of suicide to demonstrate how it had social, as opposed to purely biological or psychological, causes.

SOCIOLOGY AS A SCIENCE: POSITIVIST, INTERPRETIVIST AND POST-MODERNIST PERSPECTIVES

In the previous section we suggested sociologists try to develop factual information about the world and one way to do this is by adopting a scientific approach to evidence (*data*) collection, testing and analysis. In this section we can outline three different perspectives relating to scientific forms of enquiry, but initially we need to be clear what we mean about science.

Defining science

Science is a way of producing a particular *kind* of knowledge which, for the moment, we can loosely characterise as factual rather than knowledge based on opinion, guesswork or faith. Popper (1934), for example, argues science is "A method that involves identifying a problem to study, collecting information about it and eventually offering an explanation for it. All this is done as systematically as possible". Science, therefore, is a methodology - a way of producing knowledge with two major qualities:

Firstly, it is reliable, something that refers to the *consistency* of the data collected in any research process. This is important because we can *check* the accuracy of research data by *repeating* (or replicating) it to see if we get the same, or very similar results. A very simple example might be a researcher *cross-checking* the reliability of a response by asking the same question in a different way, such as "How old are you?" and "When were you born?". If they get two different answers, the data is *unreliable* - and any conclusions we draw from it are going to have a limited value.

Secondly, it is valid; data is only useful if it actually *measures* or *describes* what it claims to measure or describe. If, for example, we wanted to measure the extent of crime we could use *crime statistics* published by the government. We would need to be aware, however, that the validity of these statistics may be limited if they only record crimes *reported* to the police - people may not report crime for many different reasons.

In this respect, a scientific methodology means certain rules have to be followed in order to "do science", an idea we can examine in terms of two different types of rules: procedures and ethics.

Procedures

Scientific knowledge is created by following a set of *procedures*, agreed by the scientific community, that govern how data can be collected and analysed. Popper's (1934) Hypothetico-deductive model is a standard example of a scientific procedure we will outline in more detail later, but for now we can note that a scientific procedure generally begins with a hypothesis or research question that must be tested or answered in some way through the systematic collection, presentation and analysis of data. The crucial element here is the idea that any conclusions draw from scientific research have been tested against the available evidence and not been *disproven.* This procedure not only gives scientific knowledge greater *plausibility* than non-scientific knowledge, because it is based on tested facts rather than untested opinions, it also gives such knowledge a crucial quality; the ability to make predictive statements; scientific knowledge means we can say with *certainty* something *will* happen in the future.

Ethos

To ensure scientists followed these procedures - that they didn't, for example, simply make-up their results - Merton (1942) argued a scientific ethos was required. This involved a set of rules governing the general conditions research must satisfy if it is to both attain and maintain scientific status. Science, for Merton had to be:

1. Universal: Knowledge is evaluated using objective, universally agreed, criteria. Personal values play no part in this process and criticism of a scientist's work should focus on the falsification of their conclusions, identifying weaknesses in the research process, and the like. Labossiere (1995) argues scientists must avoid *ad hominem* criticism where research is rejected "on the basis of some irrelevant fact [such as age or gender] about the person presenting the claim or argument".

2. Communal: Scientific knowledge is "public knowledge" that must be freely shared within the scientific community. Scientists must, for example, be able to build on the work done by other scientists; this encourages the 'leaps of faith' (where one scientist, for example, is inspired to develop new ideas by understanding the work of other scientists) through which scientific understanding advances on a *cumulative* basis. By making their work available for peer review scientists also accept scientific knowledge cannot be taken "on trust"; other scientists must be free to replicate their work, which requires detailed knowledge of the original research.

3. Disinterested: The main responsibility of the scientist is the pursuit of knowledge and while scientists should be recognised for their achievements and rewarded for their efforts they should not have a personal stake, financial or otherwise, in the "success" or "failure" of their research; this risks introducing researcher bias into the research process, thereby making the research unreliable and invalid. If a scientist has no interest in the use to which their research is put they cannot be held accountable for how others, such as politicians or businesses, use it.

4. Sceptical: A guiding principle of science is that nothing is beyond criticism. The scientific community must continually evaluate knowledge because this 'questioning process' contributes to the development of human understanding. For Merton this 'sceptical attitude' represented the main way scientific knowledge differed from other forms of knowledge (such as religious faith); the former is 'true' only because it has not, *as yet*, been disproved. The latter, however, is considered by its adherents to be *self-evidently true;* it cannot be disproved.

In light of the above we can look at how sociologists produce scientific knowledge about the social world by outlining two different sociological methodologies: positivism and interpretivism.

Positivism

As we suggested in the first section, positivism means "*scientific"* and is based on the idea that it's both *possible* and *desirable* for social scientists to study the social world in broadly the same way as natural

scientists study the natural world. Positivist methodology (the rules governing how we should study social behaviour) has, therefore, a number of features we need to understand.

Knowledge is created by constructing and testing hypotheses - something we can broadly define as a question to which we require an answer. Such questions, however, take the form of a testable relationship between two or more things - a simple example might be something like "Does poverty cause crime?". Testing is crucial because the objective is to *disprove* a hypothesis ("poverty *doesn't* cause crime"), since if a hypothesis can't be falsified it *suggests* it might be true.

The purpose of science is to discover objective knowledge about the social world and this means sociologists must be personally objective. The research process must not be influenced by a researcher's values, beliefs, opinions or prejudices - an idea sometimes called value-freedom (see below). To avoid biasing the data collection process the scientist doesn't participate in the behaviour being studied; rather, they "stand apart from" that behaviour so it can be observed dispassionately. The research methods used must also be capable of producing objective data and should not, therefore, depend on the *subjective* observations or *interpretations* of a researcher (what they may personally believe about something). Both research and data should be capable of *replication*. In this way reliable and valid knowledge can be generated in the same way natural scientists generate knowledge; through systematic observation, critical questioning and experimentation based on personal observation and testing. Anything not directly observable, such as people's thoughts - or what they say they're thinking about something - is not valid knowledge because we can't objectively test this data; we simply have to take it on trust.

In general, this approach to scientific research involves the ability to quantify - express in numerical / statistical form - and measure social behaviour. Scientific knowledge, therefore, is factual, objective, evidence-based and testable, whereas non-scientific knowledge is based on opinion, guesswork, unsupported interpretations and untested assumptions - ideas illustrated by an example of positivist research design, Popper's (1934) Hypothetico-deductive model or paradigm; a way of organising and understanding knowledge in such a way that it becomes a model or pattern on which all subsequent knowledge is based.

Positivist research is based on the principle that reliable and valid knowledge is generated by developing and rigorously testing a hypothesis - something that provides both a focus for the research and a clearly defined objective for data collection. The researcher is locked-into a systematic design for identifying, collecting and processing data whose aim is an objective measurement of people's behaviour. Lindauer's (2005) review of research examining the educational properties of museums, for example, noted the question “Did the exhibition effectively communicate the main idea or message?” illustrates hypothesis testing: “The question poses a cause-and-effect relationship - attending an exhibit will cause visitors to acquire particular knowledge or information” that can be *measured* and therefore *tested.*

To test the hypothesis the researcher uses systematic observation to collect data, something that covers a range of quantitative methods - from questionnaires through interviews to direct observation itself. Once data has been collected the researcher must analyse it to test the hypothesis which, if confirmed, becomes part of a wider body of theory used to predict future behaviour (in the example above, if an exhibition effectively communicates a message this will always be the case). If the hypothesis is false the researcher has the option of rejecting it or revising it, in which case the research begins anew.

Interpretivism

This approach is sometimes called "anti-positivist" because it involves a different approach to scientific research, one that argues the social world is understood (or "interpreted") by different people in different situations in different ways. Everything in the social world, therefore, is relative to everything else and nothing can ever be wholly true nor wholly false; the best sociologists can do is describe reality from the viewpoint of those who create and *define* it - whether they be inmates in an asylum, teachers in a school or politicians in government.

Harris (2005) captures the difference between the two methodologies when he notes positivists use "terms like 'cause', 'law' or 'fact'" when talking about human beings as if they were "snooker balls" being pushed around by some unseen social force. Interpretivists, however, argue people are different to inanimate objects because they have consciousness - an awareness of both themselves and the world in which they live. Whereas a snooker ball has no *choice* but to move when hit, human beings exercise a wide range of choices (and responses) should someone try to do the same thing to them. The ability to think, reflect and act - rather than simply *react* - makes people very different to objects in the natural world - and we can't study them in the same way we study plants, rocks or snooker balls. The scientific study of living, thinking, beings,

therefore, requires a more-subtle and flexible approach, one based on describing social behaviour in terms of the meanings and interpretations people give to behaviour.

Where positivism explains people's behaviour "from without" in the sense of not interacting with the people and behaviour being studied, interpretivist explanations are developed "from within", in the sense of how people understand the behaviour in which they are involved. This means sociologists should take advantage of the human ability to empathise; to "take the role of the other" and experience the world in the way it is experienced by those being researched. To truly understand what it means to be homeless, for example, the researcher should become homeless because if the researcher can see the world through the eyes of the people being studied they gain a vital insight into why people behave as they do. Humphries (1970), for example, argues participation in the behaviour being researched is highly *desirable*; the researcher gets a deeper insight into behaviour because they may, for a time, actually *become* the people they're studying. Subjective involvement, therefore, is the way to produce valid data.

Interpretivism argues sociology can't predict the behaviour of conscious human beings in the same way physics can predict the behaviour of inanimate matter. This follows because behavioural rules in any society are context-bound; they shift and change depending on the particular situation in which people find themselves. A teacher behaves differently towards a student depending on the social context; telling a student to "be quiet" will provoke a difference response depending on whether the instruction was given in the classroom or in the street. How people react to the behaviour of others depends, therefore, on their understanding of the social context in which that behaviour takes place.

Where the research objective is to understand the meanings people construct and behavioural rules they apply in their everyday lives, interpretivism focuses on the collection of qualitative data - information that tells the researcher something about the quality of people's lives. While qualitative data is less reliable than its quantitative counterpart, because it is impossible to accurately replicate, it has potentially much greater validity it can tell us much more about how and why people live their lives in particular ways.

For these reasons interpretivist research design follows a different path and set of methodological rules to its positivist counterpart; it uses what Oberg (1999) characterises as an "emergent research design" constructed around four ideas:

1. Planning: A research issue is identified and a "research question" takes shape.

2a. Data Collection: This research design is non-linear in the sense it doesn't begin with a hypothesis and end with confirmation or rejection. Rather, a research question is explored from different angles - from that of those being researched to that of the researcher - because the researcher is not looking for "definitive answers" to a particular question. Rather, they're seeking to uncover how people see and understand behaviour since if, as Firestone (1987) suggests, "reality is socially-constructed through individual or collective definitions of the situation", the researcher must use a research design that offers the greatest opportunities to capture this "subjective sense of reality".

The researcher, therefore, must collect as much information as possible about the behaviour being studied, for two reasons: firstly, they cannot judge the usefulness of any data at this stage. Secondly, by casting the net far and wide the researcher involves those being studied in the research process; they may, for example, suggest ideas and issues to study that may not have originally occurred to the researcher. Where positivist research is "*goal-based",* the objective being to test whether a hypothesis is true or false, Lindauer (2005) argues interpretivist research is "*goal-free*". The researcher is free to explore whatever they - or the people they're studying - feel is important or interesting. In this respect, interpretivist research is emergent; it "takes shape as data collection and analysis proceed". Where positivist research design is rigid, strong and directs the researcher along every step in the process, the reverse is true of exploratory designs; the framework is flexible, weak and bends to take account of new research ideas and developments.

If positivist data collection is "researcher-led and focused" - the needs of the researcher are more important than those of the researched - the reverse is true for interpretivism; the needs of the researched are more important than those of the researcher. However, while the participation and subjective involvement of the researcher in their research is actively encouraged, data collection can be very time-consuming. Venkatesh (2009) for example, spent around 8 years working with the American gang he was studying.

2b. Data Analysis: While attempts may be made to categorise data or sift and sort it into a logical, descriptive, story (*narrative*), Schultz et al (1996), argue data analysis is something that happens *throughout* the research process, rather *after* data has been collected. This involves a "feedback loop" where the analysis of collected data is used to inform *further* data collection, which in turn informs *further* analysis.

Where there is no requirement to collect data to test a hypothesis analysis is both descriptive and seen from the viewpoint of both the researcher and researched.

3. Evaluation: Where positivist research involves the researcher making judgements, about what data to collect, and drawing conclusions about whether a hypothesis is true or false, interpretivist research is generally non-judgemental; the reader is left to draw their own conclusions because, as Firestone (1987) suggests, the main objective is to “help the reader understand” how people *see* their world and situation - or, as Schwandt (2002) puts it, social research involves not so much a “problem to be solved…as a dilemma or mystery that requires interpretation and self-understanding”.

Postmodernism

Both positivism and interpretivism see sociological research as being scientific in the sense we can collect objective data and, by so doing, make reliable and valid statements about people's behaviour. For positivism society has an existence "over and above" (*sui generis* as Durkheim (1897) puts it) individual behaviour evidenced by the existence of patterned behaviour that can be discovered by systematic research - something Durkheim (1895) demonstrated in his study of suicide. If suicide was simply the result of individuals making choices - to live or to die - we would expect suicides to be randomly distributed throughout the year - but this was not the case; suicides were clustered around particular parts of the year, such as January in Christian societies and from this he theorised that something must be happening "in society" to make these patterns occur; something, in other words, pushed individuals into suicide. For interpretivism, although the objective is less ambitious - the aim is to understand how and why people make sense of the world - their research still rests on the assumption it is possible to make limited, but nevertheless objective, statements about people's lives.

Postmodernism is slightly different, however, in the sense that it's not a "scientific methodology"; as Usher and Edwards (1994) argue, it is “a different way of seeing and working, rather than a fixed body of ideas, a clearly worked out position or a set of critical methods and techniques”. Postmodernism, in this respect, is a critical worldview that argues people construct *stories* (narratives) through which to make sense of the world. These personal narratives are neither true nor false; they simply are and can, of course, be revealed by sociological research. However, of greater interest here is the associated concept of metanarratives - the “big stories” a society constructs to explain something about the nature of the world; examples here include *religions* (such as Buddhism or Islam), political philosophies (such as socialism or conservativism), *nationalities* (Pakistani, Mauritian or Nigerian) and *science*.

At different times and in different societies different metanarratives that explain "how the world works" come to the fore. In pre-industrial (or pre-modern) societies, religion is the dominant metanarrative; in industrial (or modern) societies science increasingly comes to prominence as it challenges and in some respects replaces religious explanations of the world. Postmodern societies (those that develop "after modern societies"), however, are characterised by what Lyotard (1979) calls an “incredulity towards metanarratives”. People, for whatever reason, see these "big stories" as no-longer believable or sustainable; their respective claims to explain “everything about something”, or even "everything about everything", are questioned or breakdown.

It's important to note postmodernism is not "anti-science"; rather, it argues that what is significant is how people view metanarratives , not whether they are somehow true or false. From this position, postmodernism examines "science as metanarrative" - as a worldview struggling to establish its leadership (*hegemony)* over other, competing, metanarratives - and accordingly suggests a range of practical and theoretical criticisms.

Theoretical criticisms focus on ideas like objectivity. Polyani (1958), for example, argues that "all observation is theory-dependent" and to understand what we are seeing we must already know what it is. To observe "a table" we must already have a theory in our head that describes what it looks like - and this casts doubt on positivist versions of science where theoretical explanations are *produced* by observations tested during the research process. Postmodernism also questions positivist conceptions of "social reality" as something "waiting to be discovered" (just as something like electricity or gravity existed before science discovered them). The scientist is like a midwife, someone whose role is to "deliver knowledge" - which is how scientists are able to claim objectivity. Postmodernism, like interpretivism, argues this is mistaken; knowledge about the social world is actively created by people going about their daily lives - the world cannot somehow exist independently of their activities.

Postmodernists do, however, include interpretivism in this criticism; the latter are actively creating knowledge rather than merely revealing its existence. This follows because the ability to observe behaviour objectively, without influencing that behaviour and thereby changing it in some unknown way is, for postmodernists, not

credible. The act of "doing research" - whether it involves asking people questions (positivism) or participating in the behaviour being researched (interpretivism) - changes that behaviour.

Sociological research is not, therefore, getting at "the truth"; it merely presents different *versions* of truth - and the only way to decide between them is by making subjective judgements. To decide if one version is superior to another - it has a greater claim to "truth" or "validity" - we must use certain criteria against which to measure each version. "Science is superior", for example, because it is based on "objective testing and proof". If we change the criteria we change the version's status; "religion is superior" because it is based on "faith". For postmodernists, therefore, concepts like truth are inherently subjective because they are based on power relationships; those with the power to define the criteria against which the status of knowledge is measured effectively decide what is true.

Practical criticisms focus on the use to which scientific knowledge is put and postmodernists have been critical of the association between scientific knowledge and ‘progress’ – the idea science *improves people's* lives. The criticism here is that science is not necessarily a dispassionate, objective "search for truth’". As Campbell (1996) has suggested, science can also be seen "as the vanguard of European exploitation, a discipline run amok, instigators of nuclear and other weapons systems, the handmaiden of big business and the defilers of nature". These ideas bring into sharp relief the notion of a scientific ethos, with Prelli (1989) questioning the extent to which scientists actually conform to a "community of values". Scientific fraud, as Martinson et al. (2005) discovered, appears widespread; 33% of 3200 US scientists ‘confessed to various kinds of misconduct - such as claiming credit for someone else’s work, or changing results because of pressure from a study’s sponsor’.

THE USES OF SOCIOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE; THE ROLE OF VALUES IN SOCIOLOGY

The role of values

In previous sections we've suggested that one thing that sets sociological knowledge apart from other forms of knowledge - from journalism, through personal experience to everyday conversation and thinking - is that it is factual knowledge. It has this status because data is collected, analysed or tested objectively. In other words, the data collected and presented is "value-free" - it has not been influenced by the values, beliefs or prejudices of the researcher - or, more-correctly value-neutral, since it's not humanly possible to "act without values"; the best we can do is recognise the various points at which values potentially intrude into the research process and adjust our research strategy accordingly to limit or neutralise their effect. In this respect we can outline a range of points at which values potentially intrude into the research process.

Research considerations

To carry-out research a sociologist has to make certain practical choices. They must, for example, choose a topic and decisions about what, or who, to study are influenced by a researcher's values; while Goffman (1961) chose to study inmates in an asylum, Caplan (2006) choose to study changes in food consumption in Tanzania and Chennai in Southern India. Equally, these values determine whether they study the activities of the powerful as in Pearce's (1998) study of corporate criminality in the chemical industry, or the relatively powerless; Davis' (1985), for example, studied the social processes involved in 'becoming a prostitute'. These choices are, in addition, influenced by personal beliefs about difficulty -the powerful tend to value their privacy and gaining access to their world may not be easy - and danger.

Topic choice is also influenced by funding considerations; those paying for the research may not only influence *what* is studied but also *how* it is studied, something that raises ethical questions (see below) about whether a researcher should be accountable for the purpose to which their research is put. Solovey (2001), for example, argues that the proposed involvement of sociological researchers in 'Project Camelot', research funded in the early 1960s by the US government and military designed to influence internal politics and development in Chile was, at best, an ethically-questionable choice.

Choice of method is also influenced by values in the sense this reflects beliefs about how it's possible to reliably and validly study behaviour. As we've seen, different sociologists have different ideas about the respective value of quantitative and qualitative data; where questions are asked of a respondent (people who are the subject of or *respond* to the research) judgements are made about who to question, what to ask and how they are permitted to respond. Positivists, for example, may prefer to limit respondent choice by giving them a list of answers from which to choose (closed-ended questions where answers are easier to quantify) whereas interpretivists may prefer to let a respondent answer "in their own words" (open-ended questions). Values also come into play when data is analysed - the researcher must make decisions about what data to include and what to exclude form the completed research.

Dimensions of knowledge

Coser (1977) argues that while choice is always value-relevant (influenced by values), once choices about what to study and how to study it have been made value-neutrality involves the researcher *acknowledging* their values and not imposing them on the research process. Sociologists should clearly state the value-relevant assumptions in their work and make *explicit* the values they hold so these assumptions may be questioned, challenged or changed by other researchers. This applies, Coser suggests, across four related dimensions of knowledge:

- Firstly, personal knowledge reflects beliefs about how it is possible and desirable to study behaviour. Positivists, for example, maintain a personal detachment from what they study by not participating in the behaviour being researched. This social distance between researcher and respondent is achieved by using objective research methods, such as questionnaires, to ensure the researcher *doesn't* interact with their respondents in ways that influence their behaviour. Interpretivists generally argue for personal subjectivity; the researcher should get as close as possible those being researched, while maintaining an ethical objectivity - they don't simply make data up, for example.

- Secondly, ideational knowledge involves beliefs about the nature of knowledge - whether, for example, it is possible to get at 'the truth' about whatever is being studied - and this impacts on the methods used in the research process. Positivists argue it is possible to generate objective knowledge, which means the sociologist tests hypotheses using objective research methods.

Interpretivists, and to some extent postmodernists, argue all knowledge is inherently subjective and the task of the sociologist is to reveal various "forms of truth" by describing social behaviour.

- Thirdly, social knowledge refers to beliefs about the nature of the social world and how it can be studied. For positivism the social world has an objective existence and this, as Mulder (2004) notes, means the object of study (society) "exists independently of the researcher's perception of it...the object would 'be there' even if no-one perceived it". This meaning of objectivity, he argues, is "typically associated with ideas such as reality, truth and reliability". For interpretivism the social world exists subjectively and societies can't be validly studied independently of the people who create them. The aim of social research, therefore, is to reveal how people make sense of their world.

- Finally, ethical knowledge refers to the notion that whatever their level of personal involvement or belief, a researcher must strive to maintain a critical or objective detachment from their work - they do not, for example, falsify data to get the results they want - a form of objectivity to which all sociologists will necessarily subscribe. The precise role of ethics in the research process is discussed in chapter four under ethical research considerations.

The uses of sociological knowledge

Sociology is a wide-ranging academic discipline based on the assumption human behaviour can only be understood in terms of its multi-dimensional nature; that is, it looks at people "in the round" (holistically), in the sense that we are not merely psychological individuals existing in isolation from one another; although we engage in economic behaviour, through things like paid and unpaid work, this doesn't completely define us. Similarly, although we may engage in political behaviour, from voting to more-direct forms of action such as strikes or participating in protest marches, this too is but one part of our individual make-up. We are also cultural beings who create different ways of living, both across societies and within the same society at different times. In other words, understanding "who we are" involves looking at how individuals are influenced by the world in which they live and, in particular, how the economic, political and cultural dimensions of their life combine and interact. This means the uses of sociological knowledge will be many and varied but we can, by way of illustration, look at a couple of contrasting ways sociological knowledge has been used.

For classical sociology knowledge involved the development of grand theories that sought to explain ideas like social order and change:

- Marx (1867) developed theories about capitalism, economic and social exploitation and inequality.

- Weber (1905) developed theories of modernisation.

- Durkheim (1893) explored the social forces that produced and inhibited change.

More-recently the focus has moved onto a range of *social issues*:

- Feminists have highlighted the effects of patriarchy on gender relationships, work that indirectly contributed to the development of social policies in Europe and America relating to things like sexual (and, for black feminists in particular, racial) discrimination and equal pay.

- Townsend and Abel-Smith's (1965) UK poverty research also changed the way governments defined poverty - away from definitions of an absolute poverty line based on minimum nutritional needs and towards a relative definition that took account of "minimum expected living standards" in a particular society.

In this respect the uses of sociological knowledge have evolved to encompass things like contributing to and informing public debates - making people aware of social issues and bringing a different perspective to bear. Cohen's (1972) concept of moral panic and Wilkins' (1964) description of a deviancy amplification process - whereby relatively minor deviant acts can turn into criminal social problems - have, for example, arguably become part of mainstream discussions about crime and deviance over the past 50 years.

One area where sociological knowledge has a contemporary use is in relation to social policy (see below). While sociology does occasionally make direct inputs into policy through research commissioned by government departments and agencies, its contribution is more frequently felt indirectly, through a number of

different mechanisms. Sociological research can, for example, highlight particular social issues. In the UK, Townsend and Abel-Smith (1965) challenged the accepted belief that poverty had been largely eradicated in the UK and indirectly led to a range of policy initiatives designed to limit the extent of poverty. A further indirect area of influence is the way sociological knowledge can inform how governments define and measure particular issues and ideas. In recent years, for example, criticism of the validity of official crime statistics has led to the development of measures with greater validity, such as the UK British Crime Surveys.

Sociological knowledge also has a comparative role to play in the *formulation* of social policy. Stephens (2009), for example, compared the UK and Nordic (Scandinavian) welfare models to explore ideas about social inclusion and exclusion developed by a range of UK government polices over the past 10 years, from childcare to welfare benefits and care of the elderly and infirm. Another indirect role involves the testing of social policies through sociological research to monitor and evaluate their success in tackling particular issues. A further contribution sociology brings to the evaluation process is an understanding of the intended and unintended consequences of social policy. Stephens, for example, argues that *intended* consequences of recent developments in the UK welfare model have been to use *means-testing* to 'exclude' the middle classes, by targeting help where it is most needed. However, an *unintended* consequence here has been to increase feelings of social exclusion among both the very poor *and* the middle classes by lessening the contact between them.