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Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2015 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/23 Paper 2 maximum raw mark 50

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Section A

1 Quantitative data is usually presented in numerical form and taken from large-scale surveys. Typically, the methods used to collect quantitative data include questionnaires, structured interviews and secondary sources such as official statistics. There is considerable disagreement about which methods produce the best results in sociological research. A key strength of quantitative methods is that they allow the researcher to identify trends and patterns of behaviour and to make generalisations.

However, not all sociologists support the use of quantitative methods. Many, such as interpretivists, favour qualitative methods, such as unstructured interviews and observation techniques. Qualitative secondary data, such as diaries and historical documents, may also be used in sociological research. Interpretivists argue that qualitative methods reveal more about feelings and thoughts and therefore produce data that is high in validity. Feminists view this as particularly important and so they favour the use of unstructured interviews. A general criticism of qualitative methods is that they result in the collection of data that contains *researcher bias.*

(a) What is meant by the term *researcher bias*? [2]

1 One mark for a partial one such as 'people give the answers they think the researcher wants' or 'the data reflects the values of the researcher'.
2 Two marks for a clear and accurate definition.

A situation where some characteristics or behaviour of the researcher influence the responses of the people being studied so that the data collected may not be a true reflection of what it claims to represent.

Permit also responses that highlight the researcher's interpretation of data as being selective/subjective and/or supporting their own view.

(b) Describe one strength and one limitation of using official statistics in sociological research. [4]

Award one mark for identifying an appropriate advantage and a further mark for sound development [1+1]. Strengths may include:

- practical reasons such as its easy availability [this point may be allied to expense considerations]
- can provide up to date information
- allow for comparisons to be made
- being able to identify patterns and trends
- very often based on large samples increasing likelihood of representativeness
- they may help sociologists design their own research especially in relation to samples [e.g. census statistics].

These points may well be linked to reliability.

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Award one mark for identifying an appropriate limitation and a further mark for sound development [1+1]. Limitations may include:

- the fact that sociologists have no control over the production of the data;
- official agencies may have their own agenda to satisfy in the presentation of information e.g. unemployment statistics;
- they do not measure what they set out to measure e.g. crime statistics reflect reported and recorded crime not 'actual' crime.

These points may well be linked to validity

One mark for the advantage/limitation plus one mark for development (2 x 2 marks).

(c) Explain why feminists favour the use of unstructured interviews. [8]

0–4 Lower in the band, there may be a few simple points about unstructured interviews without development or links to feminism

Higher in the band, answers are likely to demonstrate a greater knowledge of unstructured interviews but misunderstand why feminists are in favour of the use of them or be in some other way marginal to the question.

5–8 Lower in the band sound account of the reasons why feminists favour the use of unstructured interviews. For example, a preference for respondents to be active participants in the research process and the belief that researcher knowledge and skill should not dominate interviews. An excellent account of the use of unstructured interviews with no reference to feminist methodology can go no higher than 5

Higher in the band, there will be clear and accurate expression of the rationale of feminist methodology where the notion of empowerment, collaboration and 'joint interpretation of meaning' might feature.

A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to six marks. To go higher, some of the points need to be developed.

N.B. This question asks candidates to 'explain', therefore there is no requirement for assessment

(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of using diaries and historical documents in sociological research. [11]

0–4 Answers at this level are likely to show only limited appreciation of the issues raised by the question.

Lower in the band, a simple answer that identifies a few basic features of either diaries or historical documents, would gain 1 or 2 marks.

Higher in the band, an answer might advance a few limited observations highlighting a strength or limitation.

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5–8 Answers at this level show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band, a simplistic description of the strengths and limitations of the use of diaries and historical documents, could gain 5 or 6 marks. Tangential responses that make a few general points about the strengths and/or limitations of secondary data but with only partial focus on diaries and/or historical documents can gain no more than 6 marks

Higher in the band, there will be an attempt to explain some of the strengths and limitations of qualitative secondary data, although the emphasis maybe mainly on practical factors such as providing cheap, accessible otherwise unavailable material, rather than issues of theory. Likely sources may be Laslett and Anderson, and Plummer. Conversely, a one-sided answer that is done very well, could also gain up to 8 marks. Very good responses may distinguish between diaries as historical artefacts and diaries as a method used by sociologists e.g. Wilmott and Young

A descriptive answer cannot gain more than 8 marks.

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate good sociological knowledge and understanding applied to the question. To reach this band there should be mention of both diaries and historical documents but this need not be balanced. There will also be an assessment of the view on which the question is based.

Lower in the band (9–10 marks), Answers will provide a sound account of the strengths and limitations of both types of secondary data. However, the assessment may lack depth and is likely to be confined to a juxtaposition of the respective claims of quantitative versus qualitative research/data in sociology.

At the top of the band, there must also be a concerted attempt to assess the overall value of using diaries and historical documents in sociological research typically balancing their high degree of validity against questionable reliability.

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Section B

2 Explain and assess different theories of how social order is maintained in society. [25]

Level 1
0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common sense observations.

Lower in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points about social order based on assertion/common sense understanding.

Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example this might constitute a very limited attempt to relate a theory of social order.

Level 2
7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band (7–9 marks), the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. For example, a basic account of one sociological theory (functionalist, Marxist, feminist, interactionist) of how social order is created would fit the bottom of the band.

Higher in the band (10–12 marks), answers may either cover a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or cover a wider range of points in limited detail. For example, a basic descriptive account of two or more theories of social order, with little or no direct link made to associated concepts like ideology or value consensus.

Level 3
13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Lower in the band (13–15 marks), answers may use only a limited range of knowledge, there will be little use of concepts/theory, and the points covered may lack development. For example, a good descriptive account of two or more theories of social order would fit the bottom of the band.

Higher in the band (16–18 marks), answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed accounts of two or more theories of social order.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4

19–25 Lower in the band (19–21 marks), the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories or showing that there are different strands to the debate e.g. structure v action or consensus v conflict. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated. Answers are likely to be marked by consideration of a good range of factors that may play a part in creating social order and show clear understanding of the differences between the main theoretical perspectives – Marxist, functionalist, interactionist, feminist – noting key differences between the theories. To be in this band, there is likely to be reference to more than two theories although a very good analysis of two can be credited.

Higher in the band (22–25 marks), there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. There will also be a sustained and explicit analysis of the strengths and/or limitations of each theory that leads to a balanced conclusion as to their relative merits. In the very best responses, there may be reference to different strands of thinking within the main theories, most likely Marxism. There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.

Answers at this level must achieve three things:

- **first**, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding;
- **second**, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question; and
- **third**, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.

3 'In modern industrial societies individuals now have much more freedom to choose their own social identities'. Explain and assess this view. [25]

Level 1

0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common sense observations.

Lower in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, about how we acquire roles or social identities.

Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common sense understanding. For example, broadly relevant references to socialisation and the concept of social identity may be defined. We may also see answers that show that the conditions of modern society have increased individual freedom, but the analysis will be very basic and may lack focus on the key idea of social identity.

Level 2

7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band (7–9 marks), the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possible with some inaccuracies. Here, answers may rely on the functionalist theory of socialisation, implying that social identities are primarily the product of influences over which the individual has little direct control.

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Higher in the band (10–12 marks), answers may cover either a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or a wider range of points in limited detail. At this level a response may contrast the functionalist theory with interactionist accounts of socialisation and note the emphasis that the latter gives to human agency in negotiating roles and identities. However, the role of socialisation is only partly relevant to the question, and answers that do no more than this should be confined to this band.

Level 3

13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Lower in the band (13–15 marks), answers may use only a limited range of knowledge, there will be little use of concepts/theory, and the points covered may lack development. At this level, the answers will be more analytical and directly focused on the question as set. There will be a basic attempt to explain why modern, prosperous societies may have provided individuals with greater opportunity to choose their own social identities. This may be done in terms of references to post-modernist ideas and/or through a discussion of changes in particular areas of society, such as the loosening of traditional class divisions, the greater independence of women, and the fragmentation of family types.

Higher in the band (16–18 marks), answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points. At the top of the band, the discussion will contain all of the above but be clearer and better directed, though the analysis may lack sharpness.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

Level 4

19–25 Lower in the band (19–21 marks), the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated. The proposition in the question will be explained fully and the assessment will be developed and well informed. It is possible to reach this level by focusing on particular social identities (class, gender, ethnic, age, etc.) and evaluating the extent to which social constraints have given way to greater individual freedom in each of the cases considered. Alternatively, the assessment may be more abstract by discussing such issues as determinism versus free will and whether the notion that people have more lifestyle choices today is more illusion than reality

Higher in the band (22–25 marks), there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well-directed towards the question. A well-expressed assessment of post-modernist theory is likely to merit marks at the top of the band.

Answers at this level must achieve three things:

- **first**, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding;
- **second**, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question; and
- **third**, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.

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