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SOCIOLOGY **9699/21**

Paper 2 Theory and Methods **May/June 2016**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

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Section A

1 Sociologists choose unstructured interviews as a method because they wish to gain a detailed understanding of an interviewee's view of a particular subject. By contrast, questionnaires and structured interviews use standardised, written questions. Questionnaires are usually completed in private, whereas in a structured interview the interviewer is present to ask the questions and record the answers.

Conducting unstructured interviews requires great skill. For example, the respondent needs to feel comfortable and be given the time to develop their answers. Furthermore, the researcher must listen carefully to the responses so that any interesting leads are identified and followed up. Sociologists who prefer to use qualitative data favour this method, which is sometimes called an in-depth interview. Depending on the nature of the research, sociologists often use a *sampling frame* to obtain their sample

(a) What is meant by the term *sampling frame*? [2]

1 One mark for a partial definition, such as 'the people who are to be studied' or 'a list of people'.

2 Two marks for a clear and accurate definition.

A sampling frame is the source or list of names from which the details of the survey population to be studied are drawn.

(b) Describe one advantage and one disadvantage of using a questionnaire in sociological research. [4]

Two marks available for each way. One mark for identification OR explanation only, two marks for identification AND explanation.

1 Advantages might include:

- Ease of coding answers
- Creation of large amounts of statistical data
- Easily replicated
- High in reliability
- Allows for easy comparisons
- No interviewer effect
- No need for highly trained interviewer
- Practical issues such as the cost or time efficiency compared with many other methods, etc.

Disadvantages might include:

- Data that contains limited depth and detail
- Likelihood of low response rates
- Theoretical [interpretivist] objections as to the validity of the data
- Imposition problem
- Offer only a snapshot
- Any other reasonable response

2 One mark for the identification plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

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(c) Explain some of the problems sociologists face when conducting structured interviews. [8]

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

Lower in the band answers may be restricted to a few vague points about interview technique that are of limited sociological relevance.

Higher in the band answers will be restricted to two basic points about the problems encountered generally in interviews, though these may not be fully focused on structured interviews or well explained.

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

Lower in the band a range of relevant points will be covered but they may be lacking in breadth or sufficient explanation.

Higher in the band answers will include several problems some of which are fully explained and demonstrate greater depth of understanding.

Problems might include:

- Inflexibility of the interview schedule
- The imposition problem
- Respondent may be unwilling to answer personal questions
- Possibility of the interviewer effect and the difficulties in putting interviewees at ease.
- Linked to the above, the danger that personal contact beyond politeness could affect the reliability of the research.
- Practical issues, for example, little time to reflect on answers
- Theoretical [interpretivist] objections as to the validity of the data

A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to six marks. To go higher, there needs to be development of three or more points.

(d) 'The limitations of unstructured interviews far outweigh their strengths.' Assess this claim. [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 interviews, would gain 1 or 2 marks,

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

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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 limitations of unstructured interviews, or strengths could gain 5 or 6 marks. Tangential responses that make comparisons with many other research methods can gain no more than 6 marks.

Higher in the band, a more detailed account focused on unstructured interviews specifically would gain 7 or 8 marks. A one-sided answer outlining limitations alone but that is done very well, could also gain up to 8 marks.

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. There will also be an assessment of the view on which the question is based. Responses at this level should have a focus on the features of unstructured interviews specifically and not interviews in general.

Lower in the band (9–10 marks), the assessment may, perhaps, be based on a simple juxtaposition of the unstructured v structured, or confined to just one or two evaluative points.

Higher in the band, the assessment may have more range or depth. Unstructured interviews will be evaluated explicitly probably via reference to key concepts such as reliability, validity, objectivity and representativeness, and/or theoretical positions [intertpretivist/positivist]. Some practical considerations may also be considered. However, it is not necessary for this evaluation to be exhaustive or very developed to achieve the highest marks.

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Section B

2 'Sociologists who believe that research can be carried out unaffected by their personal prejudices and values are mistaken.' Explain and assess this claim. [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, a few simple remarks about research with no reference to personal prejudice or values.

Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points about the way that values might affect research.

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.

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.

Answers may attempt to explain how the values of the researcher might affect the choice of research topic and/or the method employed. Alternatively, the views of those who claim sociology can be value free might be outlined.

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, the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. Expect to see a sound account of the different ways in which the values of the researcher might influence the whole process, typically this might be achieved by examining different methods and considering how free from bias/values they might be.

Higher in the band answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant and include some well-developed points.

Here, answers are likely to show some appreciation that all sociological studies may be affected by the values of the researcher. There may be reference to different theoretical positions at this level. Thinkers such as Gouldner or Becker might be used to illustrate the view held in question, which forms the critique of functionalism. Alternatively, the same point could be made in relation to the feminist idea that sociology reflects male values and methods.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4 19–25 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.

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. Different research methods will be explored with conclusions drawn about their implications for the question.

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. One option might be to highlight Weber's middle ground view that objectivity is only possible within a framework of values that should be clearly stated by researchers.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion about whether it is inevitable that sociological studies are affected by the bias and prejudice of the researcher.

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3 'Rather than being maintained through ideology, as Marxists claim, social order is based on common interests' Explain and asses 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, a few vague remarks about the nature of social order, with little sociological foundation, might be worth 3 marks.

Higher in the band there may be a simplistic attempt to define the functionalist concept of social order. Likewise, a few simple points about the Marxist view of social order, with no further development.

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

Lower in the band, the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. Responses here are likely to be descriptive accounts of Durkheim's view of social order that there needs to be a basic agreement on values for society to exist. This may well include reference to concepts like: value consensus, moral codes, mechanical/organic solidarity or the collective conscience.

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, some brief commentary on the Marxist notion that ideology and power are central to the production of social order. However, reference to these points will be largely descriptive at this level.

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 are likely to make use of concepts/theory but the range of knowledge demonstrated may be limited and the points covered may lack development.

Expect to see a sound account of the functionalist theory of social order and a clear attempt to explain the role that ideology and power might play in the production of social order. However, the discussion of the Marxist view of social order might be rather general and lack sharpness in its treatment of the concepts of ideology and power.

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 and a sharper understanding of the differences between the two perspectives will emerge. This may be evident in distinguishing differences over the concept of 'values'.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4 19–25 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.

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. Expect to see well-informed attempts to assess the respective strengths and limitations of these contrasting theories of social order.

Higher in the band, the assessment will be sustained and the points offered well-directed towards the question. Discussion of other theories of social order (interactionist, feminist, post-modernist) could also be a way of demonstrating higher level understanding if they are linked well to the assessment of the functionalist and Marxist perspectives. For example, the interactionist rejection of the idea that ideology and collective interests are something created by society and beyond the individual.

There is likely to be a well formulated conclusion about which, if either, view of social order is most convincing and why.

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