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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

SOCIOLOGY **9699/12**

Paper 1 Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research **February/March 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the February/March 2026 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **20** printed pages.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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Social Science-Specific Marking Principles (for point-based marking)

1 Components using point-based marking:

- Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term)

b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct

c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons …).

d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.)

e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities

f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).

g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion)

2 Presentation of mark scheme:

- Slashes (/) or the word 'or' separate alternative ways of making the same point.
- Semi colons (;) bullet points (•) or figures in brackets (1) separate different points.
- Content in the answer column in brackets is for examiner information/context to clarify the marking but is not required to earn the mark (except Accounting syllabuses where they indicate negative numbers).

3 Calculation questions:

- The mark scheme will show the steps in the most likely correct method(s), the mark for each step, the correct answer(s) and the mark for each answer
- If working/explanation is considered essential for full credit, this will be indicated in the question paper and in the mark scheme. In all other instances, the correct answer to a calculation should be given full credit, even if no supporting working is shown.
- Where the candidate uses a valid method which is not covered by the mark scheme, award equivalent marks for reaching equivalent stages.
- Where an answer makes use of a candidate's own incorrect figure from previous working, the 'own figure rule' applies: full marks will be given if a correct and complete method is used. Further guidance will be included in the mark scheme where necessary and any exceptions to this general principle will be noted.

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4 Annotation:

- For point marking, ticks can be used to indicate correct answers and crosses can be used to indicate wrong answers. There is no direct relationship between ticks and marks. Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- For levels of response marking, the level awarded should be annotated on the script.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
BOD	Benefit of the doubt given / the point is just about worthy of credit
E1	Explanation of the point
E2	Explanation of why it is a strength / limitation
EXP	Development / description of the point
EVAL	Evaluation point
DEV	Developed point
GEN	General point using sociological material but not applied to the question
IR	Point is irrelevant to the question
J	Juxtaposition of point
M	Material used to support the point
NAQ	Not answered question
REP	Repetition
SEEN	This material receives no credit, additional points not required
TV	Too vague
	Point that has been credited
	Incorrect response
	Irrelevant material

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Annotation	**Meaning**
On-page comment	On page comment
Highlighter	Identification of a point

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Using the mark scheme

Some of the questions are marked using a point-based system, awarding marks for specific points and accumulating a total mark by adding points.

Some of the questions are marked using level of response. For these, the level description represents performance **at the top of the level**.

For levels of response marking you should:
- award a mark at the top of the level if all criteria in the level are met
- consider the level descriptions across the full range, bearing in mind that it is not
- necessary for a candidate to give a faultless performance for maximum marks to be
- awarded within any single category
- award marks on a 'best-fit' basis; thus, compensation between higher and lower
- achievement for different criteria is acceptable.

For **Question 4** and **Question 5**, award a mark for each assessment objective separately, using the level descriptions mark scheme.
In some cases, candidates may provide a response which the mark scheme has not predicted. These answers should nevertheless be credited according to their quality.

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**Describe <u>two</u> informal social sanctions.** **Indicative content** • Ostracism • Labelling • Disapproving/approving looks • Social approval • Gossiping • Negative/positive verbal comments • Withdrawal of privileges • Ridicule • Sarcasm ***Note:*** *Sanctions can be negative and positive.* Reward a maximum of **two sanctions**. For each sanction, up to 2 marks are available: 1 mark for identifying an informal social sanction. 1 mark for describing how the sanction encourages people to behave appropriately. (2 × 2 marks)	**4**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	**Explain <u>two</u> reasons why group interviews are high in validity.** **Indicative content** • The naturalistic setting and presence of peers allows respondents to feel more relaxed and confident, encouraging more valid responses. • Opportunity to discuss in a group allows members to rethink and develop their ideas leading to more in-depth and valid responses. • A group dynamic allows respondents to spark off discussions; this may stimulate a greater range and depth of responses. • Group identity and shared meanings may emerge/be better understood and lead to more depth and detail in responses. • Group setting empowers the respondents and reduces researcher imposition – less chance of researcher bias. • Any other appropriate reason. For this question, use of sociological material is likely to be demonstrated through reference to methodological concepts or use of examples related to specific research methods. Reward a maximum of **two** reasons Up to 4 marks are available for each reason. 1 mark for giving a reason (e.g. naturalistic setting and presence of peers allows respondents to feel more relaxed and confident) 1 mark for explaining that point (e.g. this allows members to feel more confident and give more truthful and thus valid responses) 1 mark for selecting relevant sociological material (e.g. Archer, Willis, Mac an Ghaill – group interviews often used in education research on pupils) 1 mark for explaining how the material supports the point (e.g. pupils are familiar and comfortable with the setting of a group discussion leading to greater honesty in their responses) (2 × 4 marks)	**8**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	**Explain <u>two</u> strengths of field experiments as a research method.** **Indicative content** Strengths • Takes place in a natural setting (as compared to laboratory experiments) which leads to high validity. • Avoids the Hawthorne effect – participants are often unaware that they are subjects in an experiment which reduces social desirability. • Able to observe large groups (as compared to laboratory experiments) e.g. in a school. • Practical: can be done 'on the job' e.g. a teacher. • Compared to some research methods, there may be the opportunity to control some variables e.g. institutions with regulated environments such as a workplace. • Can represent change over time e.g. Rosenthal and Jacobsen. • Potential for real life impact. Researcher can help shape social policy reforms as field experiments may be seen as real-world evidence-based research. • Any other appropriate strength. Reward a maximum of **two strengths**. For each strength, up to 3 marks are available: 1 mark for identifying a strength of a field experiment (e.g. takes place in a natural setting). 1 mark for explaining why this method has this strength (e.g. the experiment takes place in an environment that can be familiar to the participants such as a school). 1 mark for explaining why it is a strength (e.g. this means there is likely to be higher ecological validity, especially as compared to a laboratory experiment). (2 × 3 marks)	**6**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	**'The media is the most important influence in shaping class identity.'** **Explain this view.** **Indicative content** • Marxist ideas about the use of media as an ISA to control the consciousness of the working class (e.g. Althusser) which can impact on their class identity. • Media creates 'symbolic boundaries' (Bourdieu), categorising cultural activities and reproducing class inequalities, creating "us vs. them" distinctions and naturalising social hierarchies. This will influence how different classes see themselves. • Popular culture/ Mass culture/ candyfloss culture (Harvey) promoted through media as a form of distraction and dumbing down, which may influence the identity of working-class people, preventing them from developing a clear sense of their situation (link to cultural pessimism/ Marxist view). • The media can reinforce/ influence class identities through advertising (products aimed at different classes) and/ or promotion of conspicuous consumption as a way of constructing your class identity. • All forms of traditional and new media (especially Television, film, newspapers and social media) socially construct and reinforce hegemonic representations of class identity. For example, upper-class people/ lifestyles are seen as aspirational; this extends to representations of monarchy; working-class subcultures are often portrayed as aggressive and confrontational; those at the bottom of the working class are often depicted as an underclass, living in poverty, welfare dependent and workshy/ lazy – these stereotypical depictions will influence classes see themselves and others.. • The middle class is the default audience of media coverage with a focus on the interests of the middle classes over other groups. Media professionals themselves are overwhelmingly from this class. **Levels of response** **Level 3: 8–10 marks** • The response contains two clear and developed points. • Good knowledge and understanding of the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity. • Sociological materials such as concepts, theories and evidence, will be used to support both points. The material selected is appropriate and focused on the question with its relevance made clear. **Level 2: 4–7 marks** • The response contains one clear and developed point and one relevant but underdeveloped point. • Some knowledge and understanding of the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity. • Sociological material is used to support at least one point. The material selected is appropriate but not clearly focused on the question or its relevance is not made clear.	**10**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	**Level 1: 1–3 marks** • The response contains one relevant but underdeveloped point and one (or more) points related to the general topic rather than the specific question. • Limited knowledge and understanding of the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity. • Any supporting material lacks focus on the specific question. **Level 0: 0 marks** • No response worthy of credit.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	**'The media is the most important influence in shaping class identity.'** **Using sociological material, give <u>one</u> argument against this view.** **Indicative content** • Difficult to assess the impact – its impact (e.g. imitation) may be exaggerated, especially in the long term • Over-deterministic – portrays individuals/ groups as passive recipients of ideological messages. • Media likely to be a more influential source of identity on, for example, youth and gender, than class. • Representations of some class groups may be becoming less stereotypical (possible link to postmodernism) • The view that class identity itself has fragmented and declined overall (possible link to postmodernism) • Social media is breaking down traditional class identities and stereotypes; digital content is not controlled just by the middle class. • The role of other agents as the most important influence, e.g. family, peers, religion. ***Note**: Role of agents relative to media e.g. parents exert control on children's access to media so family can be seen as more important. Peers may encourage young people to adopt a critical approach to their consumption of media. With these arguments responses need to explain why the agent is a more important influence than media.* **Levels of response** **Level 3: 5–6 marks** • One clear and developed argument against the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity. • Sociological material, such as concepts, theories and evidence, is used to support the argument. The material selected is appropriate andfocused on the question with its relevance made clear. **Level 2: 3–4 marks** • One clear but underdeveloped argument against the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity. • The material selected is appropriate but not fully focused on the question. Sociological evidence is used but its relevance to the argument is not made clear. **Level 1: 1–2 marks** • One point disagreeing with the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping class identity, which is undeveloped or lacking clarity. • Any material selected will lack focus on the specific question. **Level 0: 0 marks** • No response worthy of credit.	**6**

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>

Evaluate the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture.

Indicative content

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>In support of the view</th><th>Against the view</th></tr>
<tr><td>Points</td><td>

- Biological arguments that people are born with instincts and desires e.g. maternal instinct, male aggression etc.
- These are often expressed in strong (fixed traits) and weak (capabilities that are realised through environmental experience) terms.
- Socio-biology – Wilson on the strong influence of ‘biogrammers’.
- Parsons’ view of family roles as strongly linked to biology.
- Interactionist accounts of socialisation, which appear to allow some role for free will and agency in how meanings are negotiated in the socialisation process (implies an element of natural influence).
- Twin studies and adoption studies show the importance of genetics
- Any other appropriate point.

</td><td>

- Human behaviour is overwhelmingly learned via the process of socialisation e.g. language.
- Examples of feral children raised in the absence of human socialisation.
- Studies that demonstrate the impact of social forces on human behaviour e.g. Durkheim on suicide.
- Cross-cultural and other variations in gender roles implies the strong influence of socialisation.
- Mead’s concept of the ‘social self’, ‘looking glass self’ as created through social interaction, looking glass self.
- Structural functionalist emphasis on societal determinism.
- Difficult to measure the extent to which a single factor, such as nature, influences human behaviour.
- Postmodernist rejection of traditional sociological theory as a metanarrative, e.g. functionalist biological determinism (Wilson).
- Any other appropriate point

</td></tr>
</table>

</td><td>**26**</td></tr>
</table>

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th></th><th>In support of the view</th><th>Against the view</th></tr>
<tr><td>Research evidence/ theory</td><td>Wilson, Parsons, Plomin Wrong, Sociobiologists, twin studies, adoption studies</td><td>Podder & Bergvall, Durkheim, G.H Mead, Goffman, M. Mead, Oakley, evidence of specific feral children, feminists</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relevant concepts</td><td>instincts, biogrammers, expressive and instrumental</td><td>feral children, looking-glass self, social self, socialisation, deterministic</td></tr>
</table>

The above content is indicative and other relevant approaches to the question should be rewarded appropriately.

References to sociological theories such as Marxism, feminism, functionalism or postmodernism may be present but are not necessary even for full marks.
</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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Levels of response for Question 4

The maximum mark for **Question 4** is 26.

Examiners should award up to 8 marks for AO1, up to 8 marks for AO2, and up to 10 marks for AO3.

Level	AO1: Knowledge and Understanding	Marks
4	• Good knowledge and understanding of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The response contains a range of detailed points with good use of concepts and theory or research evidence.	7–8
3	• Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The response contains a narrow range of detailed points or a wider range of underdeveloped points, with some use of concepts or theory or research evidence.	5–6
2	• Basic knowledge and understanding of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The response contains a narrow range of underdeveloped points and may include basic references to concepts or theories or research evidence.	3–4
1	• Limited knowledge and understanding of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The response contains only assertive points or common-sense observations.	1–2
0	• No knowledge and understanding worthy of credit.	0

Level	AO2: Interpretation and Application	Marks
4	• A range of relevant material is selected, accurately interpreted, well developed and consistently applied to answering the question.	7–8
3	• A range of relevant material is selected and accurately interpreted but lacks either some development or clear application to the question.	5–6
2	• Some relevant material is selected and accurately interpreted but it has limited development or is not applied to the question.	3–4
1	• There is some attempt to apply sociological material but this is limited, inaccurate or lacks relevance to the specific question.	1–2
0	• No interpretation and application worthy of credit.	0

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Level	AO3: Analysis and Evaluation	Marks
5	• Very good analysis/evaluation of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The evaluation is clear, explicit and sustained.	9–10
4	• Good analysis/evaluation of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • The evaluation is explicit and direct but not sustained or relies on a more descriptive account of evidence and arguments suggesting that human behaviour is **not** shaped by nature rather than nurture.	7–8
3	• Some analysis/evaluation of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • There is juxtaposition of different arguments and theories which are not clearly focused on the question or a few simple points suggesting that human behaviour is **not** shaped by nature rather than nurture.	5–6
2	• Basic analysis/evaluation of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • There is an attempt to consider more than one side of the debate or one simple point suggesting that human behaviour is **not** shaped by nature rather than nurture.	3–4
1	• Limited analysis/evaluation of the view that human behaviour is shaped by nature rather than nurture. • Any analysis or evaluation is incidental, confused or simply assertive.	1–2
0	• No analysis and evaluation worthy of credit.	0

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>

Evaluate the use of official statistics in sociological research.

Indicative content

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>In support of the view</th><th>Against the view</th></tr>
<tr><td>Points</td><td>• Conducted on a large scale – surveys lead to representative, generalisable data.
• Product of a reliable method that is objective and value-free.
• Conducted on a regular basis – enables trends to be identified over time.
• Collected regionally/nationally so can be used to compare and identify patterns across different places.
• Can be used to test hypotheses. [Durkheim]
• Practical reasons – may be the only available source of data.
• Readily available and cheap to use.
• Any other appropriate point.</td><td>• Official statistics are produced by the state – may be prone to government manipulation
• Survey design is not by researcher.
• Researchers must decide what the data means.
• Partial picture because they only provide data on recorded events e.g., they don’t show unrecorded crime.
• Interpretivist critique of validity – they are not objective facts but social constructions.
• They don’t reveal much of the reasons why behaviour takes place
• Concepts used not operationalised by the researcher e.g. poverty. The definitions and classifications used may be unsuitable.
• Serve interests of elite groups (Marxists and feminists).
• Any other appropriate point.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research evidence/ theory</td><td>Positivism, Examples of official statistics e.g. Social Trends, education statistics, health statistics, examples of studies using forms of quantitative secondary data: Durkheim</td><td>Interpretivism, feminism, Marxism, Douglas, Atkinson.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Relevant concepts</td><td>patterns, trends, reliability, objectivity</td><td>verstehen, validity, value laden, bias</td></tr>
</table>

The above content is indicative and other relevant approaches to the question should be rewarded appropriately.

</td><td>26</td></tr>
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Levels of response for Question 5

The maximum mark for **Question 5** is 26.

Examiners should award up to 8 marks for AO1, up to 8 marks for AO2, and up to 10 marks for AO3.

Level	AO1: Knowledge and Understanding	Marks
4	• Good knowledge and understanding of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • The response contains a range of detailed points with good use of concepts and theory or research evidence.	7–8
3	• Reasonable knowledge and understanding of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • The response contains a narrow range of detailed points or a wider range of underdeveloped points, with some use of concepts or theory or research evidence.	5–6
2	• Basic knowledge and understanding of the view that use of official statistics in sociological research. • The response contains a narrow range of underdeveloped points and may include basic references to concepts or theories or research evidence.	3–4
1	• Limited knowledge and understanding of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • The response contains only assertive points or common-sense observations.	1–2
0	• No knowledge and understanding worthy of credit.	0

Level	AO2: Interpretation and Application	Marks
4	• A range of relevant material is selected, accurately interpreted, well developed and consistently applied to answering the question.	7–8
3	• A range of relevant material is selected and accurately interpreted but lacks either some development or clear application to the question.	5–6
2	• Some relevant material is selected and accurately interpreted but it has limited development or is not applied to the question.	3–4
1	• There is some attempt to apply sociological material but this is limited, inaccurate or lacks relevance to the specific question.	1–2
0	• No interpretation and application worthy of credit.	0

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Level	AO3: Analysis and Evaluation	Marks
5	• Very good analysis/evaluation of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • The evaluation is clear, explicit and sustained.	9–10
4	• Good analysis/evaluation of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • The evaluation is explicit and direct but not sustained or relies on a more descriptive account of evidence and arguments **against** the use of official statistics in sociological research.	7–8
3	• Some analysis/evaluation of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • There is juxtaposition of different arguments and theories which are not clearly focused on the question or a few simple points **against** the use of official statistics in sociological research.	5–6
2	• Basic analysis/evaluation of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • There is an attempt to consider more than one side of the debate or one simple point **against** the use of official statistics in sociological research.	3–4
1	• Limited analysis/evaluation of the use of official statistics in sociological research. • Any analysis or evaluation is incidental, confused or simply assertive.	1–2
0	• No analysis and evaluation worthy of credit.	0

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