



MARKSCHEME

May 2014

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

6 pages

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1. Describe Flammable residents’ views of their environment. [6 marks]

This primarily descriptive question requires candidates to give an account of residents’ perceptions of contamination, the widespread doubts and errors they cling to about their polluted habitat. Flammable residents are confused or mystified about the source, extent, and potential effects of contamination.

The authors define the collective perceptions of contamination and its effects among Flammable residents as “toxic uncertainty”. These collective schemes of perception mediate between the environment and the subjective experiences of Flammable residents, giving form to their views.

This uncertainty derives from misinformation, shifted responsibility and denial. Each of these manifestations is illustrated by an example through which the residents’ perceptions can be better understood. Candidates may refer to any of these in their answer to this question.

For example, it is evident in Susana’s words that she interprets the cause of pollution to be in the poorer mothers’ practices, a clear case of shifted responsibility. Also, the residents’ contradictory beliefs regarding Shell’s responsibility or the risks associated with the oil-polluted streams are examples of misinformation. Finally, Francisco uses his own body and those of his children to deny the dangers of pollution.

The better answers will make explicit reference to these issues and give an account of the contradictions between objective conditions and subjective experience, as mediated by the social reality in which they are immersed. Collective schemes of perception mediate between the environment and the subjective experience of it, giving form to what people know, ignoring and misinterpreting the surrounding dangers.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is an attempt to organize the response and identify relevant points or examples, but the response relies too heavily on quotations from the text <i>and/or</i> limited generalizations are offered.
3–4	The response is organized, identifies and explains some relevant points or examples, and offers generalizations.
5–6	The response is organized, identifies and explains detailed relevant points or examples, and links them to generalizations, demonstrating good anthropological understanding.

2. Using theoretical perspectives, explain how the authors understand knowledge to be socially produced. [6 marks]

There are several points in the text which can be drawn on to answer this question, but stronger answers will incorporate concepts and knowledge from social and cultural anthropology that are relevant to the analysis and interpretation of the passage.

The relationship between the “toxic uncertainty” and the social structure is key to an understanding of this passage. The authors explore the sources of risk perceptions emphasizing their socially constructed character. Flammable residents’ knowledge of their polluted surroundings is socially and politically determined. It does not follow straightforwardly from the toxic environment, but it is shaped by two factors; their local history and the interventions of state officials and doctors. Thus, the meanings of contamination are the outcome of power relations between residents and outside actors, whose actions and statements are highly influential and contribute to what Flammable residents know, ignore, or misrecognize about their neighbourhood. These meanings shape those unequal relationships.

The relation between knowledge and social organization can be explained in many ways. Candidates may approach this question from general anthropological concepts and terms related to different themes (individuals, groups and society; political organization; systems of knowledge). Candidates may explain how individuals are embedded in social structures and cultural dynamics that shape identity, actions and meanings, and in this particular case, mould the construction of knowledge. Thus, the “lack of knowledge” and uncertainty can be approached from the analysis of social and cultural factors constraining agency.

Knowledge, as a way of organizing and comprehending social and natural environments, is context dependent. Some candidates may refer to Marx and his view of thought as political product (false consciousness). Drawing from more contemporary theoreticians such as Bourdieu, candidates may refer to symbolic violence to interpret how these schemes of perception or dispositions are influenced by the contradictory messages of powerful actors to support residents’ own domination. Also relevant may be the concept of symbolic capital to understand state officials and doctors’ knowledge as a manifestation of power. Other contemporary concepts (*eg* socialization, naturalization, power and knowledge) can be used effectively.

Candidates may recognize the viewpoint of the anthropologists in the distinction between insider and outsider perspectives. The authors highlight the local categories and understand them not as a separate domain but in their relation to the social structure. The use of quotations of the residents gives evidence of the authors’ intention to make sense of the situation according to the agents’ point of view.

The question can be approached from different theoretical perspectives. The social production of knowledge can be analysed taking structure-centred perspectives that give account of the part played by institutional constraints. Also, diachronic perspectives may inform the authors’ argument that a historical dimension is key to understand the nature of the schemes of perception about the environment. Some candidates might refer to conflict-centred perspectives to focus on this social interaction. The use of a particularistic perspective is also a possible choice of explanation. From agency and structure perspectives, it can be argued that it is necessary to grasp the duality of social process.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response is mainly descriptive and relies on quotations, but may demonstrate limited understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts.
3–4	The response demonstrates some understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts or theory, <i>or</i> the response recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist, <i>but</i> not all of these.
5–6	The response demonstrates a critical understanding of relevant anthropological issues, concepts and theory, <i>and</i> recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist.

3. Compare and contrast the power relations in Flammable with the power relations in *one* society that you have studied in detail. [8 marks]

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. The question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of power relations as inherent to any society (or groups, institutions or sectors within it) or between societies. These relations may take many forms, allowing candidates to make comparisons. While in the Flammable situation, power and knowledge are intimately associated, other manifestations of power relations can be analysed and the answer structured in other terms. Other social groups may have alternative ways of creating inequality.

The answers need not revolve around the views of the environment or risk perceptions so long as they are about how power relations are structured. The measure of this answer lies in the way in which candidates compare and contrast and harness ethnographic knowledge, rather than it being a test of knowledge of a similar case study.

In order to obtain full marks answers must be organized in a clear manner, highlighting similarities, differences and generalizations. Candidates must situate the comparative case in terms of group, place, author and historical context to gain more than 4 marks.

Candidates may choose to use theoretical perspectives (ideally introduced in their question 2 response) to help frame their comparison.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail and its relevance is only partly established. It is not identified in terms of place, author or historical context. The response may not be structured as a comparison.
3–4	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail but its relevance is established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>or</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison.
5–6	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>and</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Either similarities <i>or</i> differences are discussed in detail, <i>but</i> not both.
7–8	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>and</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Similarities <i>and</i> differences are discussed in detail. The response demonstrates good anthropological understanding.