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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2009 question paper for the guidance of teachers

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/12 Paper 12 (Essay), maximum raw mark 50

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Section A: The Sociological Perspective

1 "Marxist explanations of social order rely too much on the role of ideology and control of the state." Explain and assess this view.

0–6 A few simple comments about the nature of social order, with no clear links to Marxist theory, might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A sound account of one or more theories of social order with no clear links to Marxist theory would merit the top of the band. General accounts of the process of socialisation, however well done, should be rewarded with no more than 6 marks.

7–12 A simple account of Marxist theory in general, with no sharply drawn links to the concept of social order, would fit the bottom of the band. A basic summary of Marxist thinking about social order, perhaps with some inaccuracy and/or omission, could trigger the top part of the band. At this level there may be little or no attempt to assess the usefulness of the Marxist theories of social order.

13–18 A sound account of the Marxist view of social order, which should include some discussion of the role of ideology and/or state power, would merit the lower part of the band. To go higher, the answer needs to either distinguish between different strands of Marxist theory or address both the role of ideology and the importance of state power in Marxist accounts of social order. In addition, at this level answers should include some element of assessment, though this may be presented in the form of juxtaposing Marxist theory with other theories of social order. The assessment at the lower end of the band may be little more than rudimentary, but expect a more developed analysis to emerge in answers at the top of the band.

19–25 A good account of the Marxist perspective on social order will be evident at this level. This will include discussion of both the role of ideology and the importance that Marxists attach to the exercise of state power in maintaining social order. The discussion may also identify different strands of Marxist theory, particularly in answers that merit the top part of the band. There will also be an assessment of the usefulness of Marxist explanations of social order. While this may be delivered primarily through juxtaposition with other sociological theories, there should also be some more explicit analysis of the strengths and/or limitations of Marxist contributions to understanding social order. At the top of the band, thoughtful and well constructed conclusions will emerge and a strong analytical approach will run through the body of the answer.

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2 "Traditional social identities, such as those based on class and ethnicity, have little influence on the way people live today." Explain and assess this post-modernist view.

0–6 A few vague reflections on the nature of social class, gender or ethnicity, with only weak links to the question, might be worth 3 or 4 marks. Some general points about post-modernist theory, poorly linked to the question, would trigger the top of the band.

7–12 Answers that merit the lower part of the band may lack references to post-modernist theory and focus on discussing other sociological accounts of the influence of social class (or gender or ethnicity) today without linking the material effectively to the concepts of social identity and lifestyle. To go higher in the band, answers need to demonstrate at least some limited awareness of the arguments that post modernists employ to debunk deterministic accounts of how social identities are acquired today. There may be little or no assessment of the post-modernist arguments at this level.

13–18 Lower in the band a sound account will be provided of the post-modernist arguments to which the question alludes. There will also be some assessment of post-modernism, though the analysis is likely to very limited at this level. Higher in the band the account of post-modernist theory will be more detailed and/or better explained. The assessment will also be more advanced, while still possibly lacking somewhat in terms of depth and range.

19–25 A good account of the relevant post-modernist themes will be advanced at this level. While the discussion may focus mainly on the purportedly declining influence of social class, there might also be references to gender and ethnicity as possible influences on social identity. The assessment may include some juxtaposition of different sociological theories, but it will also extend beyond this to include some explicit evaluation of the strengths and/or limitations of the post-modernist view/arguments on which the question is based. Higher in the band, the assessment will give due weight to the complex nature of the issues raised by the post-modernist critique of traditional sociological perspectives on the links between stratification and social identity. Simple conclusions will be avoided and persuasive arguments will be offered to support the evaluative content of the answer.

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Section B: Sociological Methods

3 "With participant observation, the best results are achieved when the researcher observes the group covertly." Explain and assess this claim.

0–6 A few basic points about research methods in general, with no clear links to participant observation, might be worth 2 or 3 marks. Some simple points about participant observation, with no distinction drawn between overt and covert methods, would trigger the top of the band. Answers that are confined to defining the difference between covert and overt observation could also reach the top of the band.

7–12 A sound account of the strengths and/or limitations of participant observation, with no distinction drawn between covert and overt methods, could achieve up to 10 marks. To go higher, there must be some attempt to describe the benefits and/or drawbacks of the covert method of observation. The discussion is likely to lack detail at this level and may focus mainly on practical points rather than exploring the more complex theoretical issues of validity, objectivity, and ethics. At this level there may be little or no assessment of the claim on which the question is based.

13–18 A sound account of some benefits and drawbacks of covert participant observation, with the focus perhaps more on practical issues, would fit the lower part of the band. A more developed discussion of covert participant observation, with greater understanding of the relevant theoretical and/or ethical issues, would trigger the top part of the band. There must also be evidence of some assessment at this level, though lower in the band this is likely to be confined to a few simple contrasts with overt participant observation. Higher in the band, the assessment may still be based on the juxtaposition of the two types of participant observation, though now a broader range of contrasts between covert and overt observation will be detailed.

19–25 A good account of the benefits and drawbacks of covert participant observation will be offered at this level, and the treatment of relevant theoretical issues will be accurate and well informed. The assessment may still be based primarily on making contrasts between covert and overt observation, though now there must also be some attempt to draw direct conclusions about the usefulness of covert participant observation. The more developed the assessment in terms of analysing explicitly the usefulness of covert participant observation, the higher in the band the answer is likely to reach. Good use of relevant participant observation studies to illustrate key points may also be a feature of answers in this band, though in theory it would be possible to reach the top of the band without mentioning any studies.

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4 "Choice of research method is influenced mainly by the theoretical perspective of the sociologist." Explain and assess this view.

0–6 A few isolated points about research methods in general, or about particular research techniques, would merit 3 or 4 marks. A simple account of different theoretical perspectives with no clear links to the question as set, could reach the top of the band.

7–12 An answer that is confined to describing different research methods, with no clear focus on the factors that influence choice of method, can gain no more than 10 marks. A sound account of different theoretical perspectives, which leaves implicit any links to choice of research methods, would also fit the lower part of the band. A basic attempt to show how one or more theoretical perspective might influence the choice of research method, with no wider development, would trigger the top of the band. There may be little or no assessment of the claim on which the question is based at this level.

13–18 A sound account of the links between theoretical perspectives and choice of research methods would be sufficient to trigger the lower part of the band. To go higher, there also needs to be some consideration of other factors that might influence the research methods chosen. These other factors might include, for example, funding, practicality, ethical concerns, career promotion and status, opportunity, and research aims. Lower in the band the assessment is likely to be mainly or wholly implicit and may rely primarily on demonstrating the strength of the links between theoretical perspective and choice of research method. Higher in the band the analysis will be more developed and will attempt, albeit simply perhaps, to draw conclusions about the relative importance of factors that might influence choice of research method.

19–25 A good account of the links between theoretical perspectives and choice of research methods is one of the requirements to reach this band. Answers must also include references to other factors that may influence choice of research method. In addition, the claim on which the question is based will be assessed explicitly and conclusions drawn about the relative importance of theoretical perspective in influencing choice of research methods. Examples from studies could be used to good effect in illustrating the factors that influence choice of research methods, though it is not essential to refer to studies in order to trigger the top of the mark range. Higher in the band, the assessment will be more sustained and incisive, with a balanced weighing-up of the different factors that can impact on the choice of research methods in particular situations.

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Section C: Sociological Differentiation and Stratification

5 "Feminist theories place too much emphasis on the concept of patriarchy in explaining gender inequality in employment." Explain and assess this view.

0–6 A few simple observations about the nature of gender inequality in employment may be worth 3 or 4 marks. Some poorly articulated points about feminist theory in general, with no direct links to the question as set, would trigger the top of the band.

7–12 A sound account of feminist theory that is not particularly well linked to the topic of gender inequality in employment could gain up to 10 marks. Likewise, a general account of the possible causes of gender inequality in employment, with no clear links to feminist theory, could also gain up to 10 marks. A basic account of feminist explanations of gender inequality in employment, perhaps lacking somewhat in detail and accuracy, would fit the top of the band. At this level, there need be little or no assessment of the view expressed in the question.

13–18 A sound account of feminist explanations of gender inequality in employment would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, the account will be more detailed and might begin to distinguish between different strands of feminist theory. There will also be an attempt to assess the view that feminist theories place too much emphasis on the role of men in creating gender inequality in employment. Lower in the band, the assessment may be largely implicit and might, for example, rely on demonstrating the centrality of the concept of male power/patriarchy in feminist accounts of gender inequality. Higher in the band, the assessment will be more explicit and there will be some references to factors other than male power that may be implicated in the production of gender inequality.

19–25 A good account of feminist explanations of gender inequality in employment will be offered at this level, and this is likely to include some references to different strands of feminist theory. Other explanations for gender inequality in employment may also be considered and this could provide the basis for an assessment of the view expressed in the question. Higher in the band, the assessment will be more detailed and incisive. Good use of different theoretical perspectives, for example, might be a distinguishing feature of answers that merit the top of the band. Evidence from relevant studies might also be used to good effect in answers that provide a sustained and sophisticated assessment of the view expressed in the question.

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6 "Attempts to explain racial discrimination in terms of cultural factors overlook the underlying economic forces that determine the pattern of inequality in society." Explain and assess this view.

0–6 A few simple points about the nature of racial discrimination, with no clear links to the question as set, might be worth 3 or 4 marks. Some general comments about the causes of inequality in society, not necessarily linked to race/ethnicity, could reach the top of the band.

7–12 A basic account of one or more explanations of social inequality, with only limited links to race/ethnicity, could gain up to 10 marks. To go higher, the explanations must relate to racial discrimination specifically. However, within this band answers are unlikely to distinguish clearly between cultural and structural/economic explanations of ethnic inequality and racial discrimination. Also, there may be little or no assessment of the view expressed in the question at this level.

13–18 Lower in the band, answers will offer a sound account of at least one sociological explanation/theory of racial discrimination. However, little or no attention will be given to the distinction made in the question between cultural factors and underlying economic forces. Higher in the band, the explanations offered will cover both cultural and structural/economic factors, though any effort to distinguish between the two types of explanation may be somewhat hazy. Lower in the band, the assessment may be quite rudimentary and may, for example, be confined to a few simple points supporting or criticising a particular explanation of racial discrimination. Higher in the band, there will be some attempt to assess explicitly the view expressed in the question, though the candidate's understanding of the underlying issues may still be rather limited.

19–25 A good account of different explanations/theories of racial discrimination will be offered at this level. The distinction between cultural and structural/economic explanations will be handled with a degree of clarity and understanding of the underlying issues. Lower in the band, answers may focus mainly on contrasting functionalist and Marxist theories of racial discrimination and ethnic inequality. Higher in the band, however, we should expect a wider range of explanations and/or analytical points to be covered, perhaps with some attempt to draw on the contributions from sources such as Weber and his followers, post-modernism, and feminist theory. The view that economic forces are the key to understanding racial discrimination will be assessed through an explicit and sustained analysis of the key issues. Higher in the band, the assessment will be balanced and avoid simple conclusions favouring one particular type of explanation or approach.

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