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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

9699/22 Paper 22 (Data Response), maximum raw mark 50

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.

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1 Positivists believe that the study of society can, and should, be based on the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences. Through their research positivists seek to discover general laws that explain the causes and consequences of social phenomena, such as rates of crime and suicide. Positivists believe that human behaviour, like the subject matter of the natural sciences, can be directly observed and objectively measured. In this view, people react to external factors and their behaviour can be explained in terms of this reaction.

By contrast, sociologists who support the interpretivist perspective think that there are fundamental differences between human behaviour and the inanimate objects that are studied by the natural sciences. As a result, the methods and principles of the natural sciences are inappropriate to the study of humans. Unlike inanimate objects, humans have consciousness involving thoughts, feelings, intentions and self-awareness. As a consequence, interpretivists argue, people attach meaning to their actions. It is this process within the mind of the social actor that must be investigated in order to understand human behaviour. Interpretivists reject what they see as the *determinism* in the positivist view of human behaviour. The assumption made by positivists that the methods of the natural sciences are objective and value-free has also been questioned by the interpretivists.

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

Determinism refers to the idea that human behaviour can be explained in terms of the controlling influence of factors that are external to the individual. An accurate definition along these lines would be worth two marks. One mark for a partial definition such as, for example, 'society is greater than the individual' or 'the opposite of voluntarism'.

(b) Describe *two* limitations of using laboratory research in sociology. [4]

Problems in using laboratory research in sociology include, for example, difficulty controlling variables, demand characteristics, ethical issues, and how to accommodate a significant number of people in a confined area. One mark for identifying each problem and one mark for describing each problem. (2 × 2 marks)

(c) Explain why the assumption that the methods of the natural sciences are objective and value-free can be questioned. [8]

0–4 A few general points about the characteristics of scientific method, with no direct links to the question set, would fit the lower part of the band. A similar answer that shows some understanding of what is meant by objectivity and value freedom would trigger the top part of the band.

5–8 Answers at this level must explain why the assumptions that the methods of the natural sciences are objective and value-free can be questioned. Lower in the band, the response may be limited to a basic account of one relevant theorist, such as Kuhn, Popper, Lynch, the Realists, Medawar, etc. Higher in the band, a wider range of relevant contributions questioning the objectivity and value freedom with which science is practised, will be considered.

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(d) Assess the interpretivist view that the methods and principles of the natural sciences are inappropriate to the study of human behaviour.

0–4 A few simple points describing the methods and principles of the natural sciences might be worth 2 or 3 marks. A limited attempt to describe the interpretivist perspective, with no direct links to the question set, would trigger the top of the band.

5–8 A simple account of the interpretivist critique of positivism, perhaps relying mainly on a re-working of material in the source material, would fit the lower part of the band. A fuller account along the same lines would merit the higher part of the band. Any assessment of the interpretivist view may be very limited at this level.

9–11 At this level, a good account of the interpretivist critique of positivism will be complemented by an assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the interpretivist position. Lower in the band, the assessment may be limited in both range and depth. At the top of the band, the assessment must either cover a good range of issues and/or demonstrate depth of understanding.

2 The research methods most widely used by sociologists are questionnaires, interviews and observation. Other methods of sociological research include the use of experiments, case studies and life histories. Experiments are most favoured by sociologists within the positivist perspective. The type of experiments that are used in sociology are usually field experiments rather than the laboratory-based research that is carried out in the natural sciences. Case studies and life histories are used most by sociologists adopting an interpretive approach.

Sociological research may also involve the use of secondary data. Secondary data is information that already exists and has been gathered by other people or organisations. Official statistics provide an important source of secondary data for sociological investigation. Other sources of secondary data that sociologists have used in their studies include diaries, biographies, letters, historical documents, and sound and video recordings. One use for this type of data involves content analysis where the researcher studies the messages that are conveyed when people talk or write. However, special care needs to be taken when using secondary sources in sociological research as the data may contain bias and therefore lack validity.

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

Validity refers to the degree to which a technique measures what the researcher intends it to measure. Accept also references to validity referring to data that produces a true picture of what is being studied. Two marks for an accurate definition along these lines; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'accurate data' or 'validity means truthfulness'.

(b) Describe *two* advantages of using secondary data in sociological research. [4]

Advantages of using secondary data include, for example, cost effective, time effective, access to information from the past, adds depth and support to primary data, can be used as a source for investigation as in the case of content analysis. One mark for identifying an advantage plus one mark for describing each advantage. (2 × 2 marks)

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(c) Explain why positivists might criticise the use of case studies and life histories in sociological research. [8]

0–4 A few simple points about positivism, with no direct links to the question, would fit the lower part of the band. A description of what case studies and life histories involve, with no further development, could reach the top of the band.

5–8 At this level, answers must focus on why positivists might criticise the use of case studies and life histories. Lower in the band, the explanation might be rather general and perhaps focused more on the positivist critique of interpretive approaches overall, as opposed to concentrating or the particular characteristics of case studies and life histories. Higher in the band, the explanation offered will demonstrate a sound understanding of case studies and life histories and the reasons why positivists might be sceptical about the use of these methods in sociological research.

(d) Assess the usefulness of official statistics as a source of secondary data in sociological research. [11]

0–4 A few simple points about the value of statistical data in general might be worth 2 or 3 marks. An answer that demonstrates some understanding of what official statistics involve, without direct links to the question, could trigger the top of the band.

5–8 A sketchy run through of a limited range of benefits and/or drawbacks of official statistics would fit the lower part of the band. A wider range of benefits and/or drawbacks, still perhaps presented in a rather list-like way, would merit the higher part of the band. Any assessment at this level is likely to be left largely, or wholly, implicit.

9–11 Answers at this level must address both the benefits and the drawbacks of official statistics, though not necessarily with equal attention. Answers will also go beyond merely outlining benefits and drawbacks to discuss directly the issue of 'usefulness'. At the bottom of the band, the assessment will be brief and lacking in depth. To go higher, we should expect sound conclusions to be drawn about the usefulness of official statistics in sociological research.

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3 With the development of capitalism, Karl Marx believed that sections of the middle class would become absorbed into the working class. In the process, they would adopt working class norms and values. Marx also expected that the working class would become increasingly impoverished and, as a consequence, they would develop *class consciousness* and be more determined in their opposition to capitalism. To many commentators, however, industrialisation has not brought about the changes Marx anticipated. Since the mid-nineteenth century when Marx was writing, the middle class population has increased. Moreover, the working class has become relatively more, and not less, affluent. Indeed, it has been suggested that a process of embourgeoisement has taken place whereby more affluent sections of the working class take on the norms and value of the middle class.

However, some sociologists dispute that embourgeoisement has happened and they point to evidence that shows continuing wide gaps in the distribution of income and wealth between lower paid workers and the managerial and property owning classes. They also claim that social class identity remains very important in modern industrial societies despite the growing influence of other types of identity based on ethnicity, gender, age and consumption patterns. Marx's concept of proletarianisation has been revised by sociologists such as Braverman to argue that the working class is actually expanding today through the addition of increasing numbers of de-skilled white-collar workers.

(a) What is meant by the term *class consciousness*? [2]

Class consciousness refers to the degree of awareness within a class of a class system, of their common interests, and of their capacity for collective political or industrial action. An accurate definition along these lines would be worth two marks; one mark for a partial definition such as 'knowing you belong to a class' or 'recognising how the class system works' or 'acting in the interests of your class'.

(b) Describe *two* examples of social class inequality. [4]

There are a wide range of possible examples of class inequality, including material deprivation, educational deprivation, differences in access to health care, differences in terms and conditions of employment, and so on. One mark for identifying each example and one mark for describing each example. (2 × 2 marks)

(c) Explain why some sociologists believe that a process of proletarianisation is occurring in modern industrial societies. [8]

0–4 Some general comments around the theme of class boundaries and changes in social class formation, without direct links to the question, might be worth 2 or 3 marks. An answer that demonstrates a basic understanding of what proletarianisation means, but which largely fails to address why this process may be occurring in modern industrial societies, would fit the top of the band.

5–8 Answers at this level will be focused on explaining why some sociologists believe that a process of proletarianisation is occurring. The most likely source to be discussed is the work of Braverman, though references to other sociologists and/or other types of response potentially could be equally valid. Lower in the band, the explanation offered will lack some detail and/or may include some inaccuracy. Higher in the band, a fuller explanation will be offered and it is likely that the candidate will outline several respects in which it may be claimed that sections of the middle class are becoming proletarianised. Note that no assessment of the proletarianisation thesis is required in order to achieve full marks for this question.

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(d) Assess the claim that social class identity remains important in modern industrial societies. [11]

0–4 A few general comments on the nature of social class might be worth 2 or 3 marks. An answer that demonstrates some awareness of what is meant by 'social class identity', with no further links to the question, would trigger the top of the band.

5–8 Lower in the band, answers are likely to skirt around the issues raised by the question. For example, this would include the type of response that is confined to describing different theories of social class. Higher in the band, answers will address directly the claim that social class identity remains very important in modern industrial societies, though the discussion is likely to be fairly descriptive and possibly one-sided.

9–11 At this level, there will be a clear attempt to provide an assessment of the claim on which the question is based. A range of evidence and/or theories will be used to analyse the extent to which social class identity remains important to modern industrial societies. This might include some now dated material, such as references to the Affluent Worker study and the work of writers such as Miliband, Parkin, and Poulantzas. Higher in the band certainly, there should also be references to more recent studies and/or theories. The post-modernist contribution to the debate, in particular, is likely to be covered in answers that reach the top of the band.

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