

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

**MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2011 question paper
for the guidance of teachers**

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/11

Paper 1 (Essay), 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.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

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Section A: The Sociological Perspective

**1 "Sociological research can and should be based on the methods of the natural sciences."
Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- (0–6) Some limited observations about sociological research methods might be worth two or three marks. A few simple points broadly demonstrating an understanding of the positivist position would trigger the top part of the band.
- (7–12) At this level, answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of the methods of the natural sciences and the position advanced by the positivists in the debate about sociological method. Higher in the band, there may be some attempt to contrast the positivist position with the interpretivist perspective, though this will be at a very basic level. Answers that focus on a critique of the methods used in the natural sciences, without relating the discussion to sociological enquiry specifically, are unlikely to merit more than 12 marks.
- (13–18) Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound understanding of both the positivist and anti-positivist positions. Lower in the band, the response will still largely be descriptive and few, if any, clear conclusions will emerge. Higher in the band, the assessment will be explicit and basic arguments for and/or against the proposition in the question will be advanced.
- (19–25) At this level, responses will be based on a good understanding of the positivist and anti-positivist positions, and the assessment will be explicit and well developed. Lower in the band, the range of analytical points may be confined to the conventional positivist versus interpretivist debate. Higher in the band, a wider range of points may feature, possibly including references to one or more of the following: the post-modernist perspective, the feminist critique of positivism, and debates about the role of values in sociology. Competent answers that also include some discussion of the 'should' aspect of the question are also likely to trigger the upper part of this band.

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2 “The individual has little control over the social forces that shape his or her life.” Explain and assess this view. [25]

- (0–6) An answer based on a few common-sense observations about individual freedom may be worth two or three marks. A simple attempt to explain the concept of socialisation would merit the upper part of the band.
- (7–12) Answers at this level will focus primarily on explaining the view expressed in the stem. A simple functionalist account of the constraining influences of social forces, for example, may merit marks at the lower end of the band. If this is developed in some way, such as through comparisons with other structural theories (e.g. Marxist, structuralist, etc.), a mark at the top end of the band may be justified. There will be little or no attempt to assess these structural theories at this level. Simple descriptive accounts of the processes of socialisation, with no clear references to actual theoretical perspectives, would fit the lower part of the band. Answers that rely almost wholly on recounting the examples of so-called feral children would be worth no more than 7 or 8 marks.
- (13–18) A good descriptive account of the sociological perspective (structuralist) that informs the view expressed in the stem would merit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, there will in addition be some assessment of the structuralist viewpoint. The assessment may take the form primarily of juxtaposing the structuralist and interpretivist perspectives. Assessment could also be made through consideration of relevant empirical evidence, for example, from studies of deviance and education. Likewise, a more philosophical angle may be adopted with discussion of, for instance, the determinism versus voluntarism debate, or Wrong's 'oversocialised' concept of humankind argument. The post-modernist perspective might also be used to good effect in demonstrating some of the limitations of the structuralist viewpoint.
- (19–25) At this level, there will be a clear and accurate understanding of the view expressed in the question and the sociological reasoning and traditions that underpin it. The assessment of the view will be detailed and sustained, especially at the top end of the band, and there will be an attempt to reach balanced and well-reasoned conclusions. Arguments may be advanced both for and against the emphasis on social constraint that characterises structural theories, though the two sides do not need to be treated with equal consideration or respect.

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Section B: Sociological Methods

3 Assess the strengths and limitations of using secondary data in sociological research. [25]

- (0–6) A few general points about research methods, with no clear links to secondary data, might be worth two or three marks. A few disparate points about official statistics would trigger the top of the band.
- (7–12) At this level, the response is likely to be descriptive, possibly focused on an account of Durkheim's use of official statistics in his study of suicide. A few strengths and/or limitations will be covered in passing but there will be little or nothing in the way of assessment. Higher in the band, a wider range of relevant points will be offered and/or better use made of examples to illustrate the different types and uses of secondary data in sociological research.
- (13–18) A range of strengths and limitations will be identified, though not necessarily with equal treatment. Lower in the band, the assessment may lack theoretical sophistication and perhaps focus mainly on practical strengths and limitations. Higher in the band, there will be some theoretical input, whether through discussing concepts such as reliability and validity, or by linking the question to the wider debates between positivists and interpretivists.
- (19–25) Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the advantages and limitations of using secondary data in sociological research. A range of practical and theoretical points will be covered, possibly supported by well-chosen references to relevant studies. Lower in the band, the assessment may lack some sharpness and detail, while these deficiencies will be less evident higher in the band. Highly-rewarded answers should also feature balanced, well-reasoned conclusions about the overall merit or otherwise of using secondary data in sociological research.

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4 "Participant observation studies have little value in sociological research because they are too subjective." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) A few basic points about research methods in general might be worth two or three marks. A simple description of what participant observation involves, with no further development, would merit the upper part of the band.
- (7–12) A sound account of participant observation as a research method, with little or no attempt to address the specific issues raised by the question, would merit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, the issue of subjectivity in relation to participant observation will briefly be addressed, though coverage of this theme is likely to be implicit rather than explicit at this level.
- (13–18) Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of participant observation and there will be a sound explanation of the claim made in the stem about the method being too subjective. Lower in the band, the response will be wholly or largely descriptive. Higher in the band, there will be an attempt to assess the claim that participant observation studies are too subjective, though the analysis is likely to lack depth at this level.
- (19–25) Building on a good understanding of participant observation, the claim on which the question is based will be explained accurately with ample illustration. There will also be a well-focused assessment of the issues raised by the question. This may occur within the context of a general assessment of participant observation studies, though links with the concept of subjectivity will also be developed explicitly. At the top of the band, some extra sophistication will be demonstrated by, for example, demonstrating the relevance of the distinction between covert and overt participant observation for the question, and/or recognising that subjectivity may be more a strength than a weakness of participant observation studies.

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Section C: Social Differentiation and Stratification

5 "Ownership of property is still the main source of economic and political power in modern societies." Explain and assess this claim. [25]

- (0–6) A few simple assertions about where power lies in modern societies may be worth two or three marks. A very limited account of the Marxist theory of class, with no further development, would merit the top of the band.
- (7–12) Answers will demonstrate some awareness of the sociological theory (Marxist, primarily) that underpins the idea that property ownership is a key source of power, and higher in the band there will also be some recognition that there may be other sources of power and/or that property ownership may be less important than it was in the past. A general account of Marxist theory, noting some of its limitations but without a clear focus on the analysis of power in society, could reach the top of the band, though no higher.
- (13–18) It is likely that at this level answers will identify an appropriate theoretical framework for addressing the question. This might take the form of a critique of the traditional Marxist theory of power, or it may focus more specifically on the managerial revolution thesis advanced in different ways by thinkers such as Bell, Burnham, and Dahrendorf. There may be other equally appropriate approaches. Lower in the band, the response may be largely or wholly descriptive. To reach the top half of the band, however, there must be an attempt to assess the claim on which the question is based.
- (19–25) Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the issues raised by the question and there will be a sustained and well-informed assessment. Theoretical and/or empirical material may be used to explore the issues, though a good mix of the two may be one feature to look for in answers that justify marks at the top of the band. Assessment that relies over-much on material from the 1950s and 1960s, e.g. the managerial revolution thesis, would have to be very well done to trigger this band and even then should be restricted to the bottom of the band. Higher in the band, there will be some use of more contemporary material, including possibly the contributions of post-modernist writers. While it is not essential to distinguish between economic and political power in answering the question, candidates who make good use of this distinction should be highly rewarded and it may be a feature to look for in answers at the top of the band.

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6 Assess sociological explanations for the existence of racial discrimination in modern industrial societies. [25]

- (0–6) A few observations about the nature of ethnic/racial inequality would be worth two or three marks. A simple attempt to explain the existence of racial discrimination, based on assertion rather than references to appropriate sociological theories, would trigger the upper part of the band.
- (7–12) A basic descriptive account of one or more relevant explanations of racial discrimination will feature here. Explanations may cover, for example, cultural/historical factors, the structure of the labour market, Marxist analysis, the impact of nationalism, and the various debates about the existence of an underclass. Candidates who can describe two or more of these explanations reasonably well should be placed at the top of the band.
- (13–18) Two or more relevant explanations will be described accurately and there will also be an attempt to assess their usefulness in explaining racial discrimination. Lower in the band, the range of explanations will be more limited and/or the assessment will be mainly or wholly by juxtaposition. Higher in the band, the assessment will be explicit to some extent, though perhaps lacking depth and sharpness.
- (19–25) Answers will demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of a range of explanations. This may be supported by references to relevant studies and/or analysis of what is meant by racial discrimination. Simple conclusions will be avoided and the assessment will be detailed and sustained, especially at the top of the band. Candidates who use post-modernist contributions to highlight the limitations in earlier sociological accounts of racial discrimination are likely to feature high in the band.