

NOVEMBER 2002

GCE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY AND ADVANCED LEVEL

MARK SCHEME

MAXIMUM MARK : 50

SYLLABUS/COMPONENT : 9699/02

SOCIOLOGY

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1.

Sociology aims to understand what humans do, not through studying the biological or individual psychological make-up of individuals, but by examining the way that the society in which they live influences and shapes what they do. In the debate about whether humans behave 'naturally' or are 'nurtured', sociologists are firmly on the side of nurture. They claim that in order to participate effectively in society we must learn particular roles and the norms and values appropriate to them through interaction with other individuals. This process is called 'socialisation'

However, there are different views in sociology about how individuals learn the norms and values of society. For example, is a social identity something that can be chosen and interpreted by individual actors or is an individual's identity in reality more like the part an actor learns for a performance where their role and lines have already been written for them?

a) What is meant by the term *norms*? (2)

A norm is a shared expectation of behaviour that connotes what is considered culturally desirable and appropriate. Two marks for an accurate definition along these lines. One mark for a partial effort e.g. "norms are social rules".

b) Describe two examples of how society may shape what individuals do. (4)

One mark for each example identified; one mark for the development of each example. Obviously, many possible examples, such as: the impact of the legal system and/or informal means of social control in securing conformity to social rules; the influence of family or peer group in choice of occupation, lifestyle, education, etc.

c) Explain why sociologists consider that human behaviour is influenced by nurture rather than nature. (8)

0-4 Some answers may offer only a descriptive account of the process of socialisation and would therefore be appropriately placed at this level. Answers that offer only a descriptive account of examples of children raised with little or no human socialisation should also be confined to this level.

5-8 The reasoning behind the sociological emphasis on nurture/socialisation will be explained. This may involve explaining why accounts of human behaviour based on references to nature are limited and possibly flawed. Studies that demonstrate the impact of social forces on human behaviour (e.g. Durkheim's study of suicide; or studies of cross-cultural variations in gender roles) may also be cited as evidence in favour of the sociological perspective.

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d) Assess the view that social forces beyond their control determine an individual's identity. (11)

- 0-4 Answers will demonstrate limited awareness of what the question is asking. We may expect a few vague points about the influences and/or constraints on human behaviour and identity.
- 5-8 Answers will demonstrate some basic awareness of the debate about determinism and free will in sociological theories about the formation and development of an individual's identity. Higher in the band this may be contextualised in terms of appropriate theories such as the functionalist, Marxist, symbolic interactionism, post-modernism, etc. Assessment will be evident higher in the band, but only poorly developed. Reward candidates who identify 'social forces' explicitly e.g. references to group dynamics, structural constraints, ideological apparatuses, etc.
- 9-11 As for the previous band, except the assessment will be well informed and sustained. At the top of the band, the limitations of both the determinist and the voluntarist positions will be explored. More complex notions such as reflexivity, structuration, and the shifting and fragmented nature of individual identities may feature in the best answers. Similarly, good answers may consider different conceptions of what is meant by 'social forces' e.g. structural versus interactionist accounts.

2.

The concepts of 'reliability' and 'validity' are important in the evaluation of any research. If another research group can replicate the methods of one piece of work on a later occasion, and it produces the same results, then it is deemed to be reliable. Total reliability is difficult to achieve in any sociological research, and is almost impossible in any qualitative research given that this research may typically take the form of a single individual observing a group over several years.

'Validity' concerns whether a piece of research successfully achieves what it claims to have set out to do. It is the property of being a genuine, true reflection of the attitudes, behaviour, or characteristics under study.

a) What is meant by *qualitative research*? (2)

Qualitative research, generally associated with the interactionist perspective, tends to be used to refer to forms of data collection and analysis that rely on understanding, with an emphasis on meanings. Two marks for an accurate definition along these lines. One mark for a partial effort e.g. "research that is subjective" or "research based on the interactionist perspective".

b) Describe two reasons why total reliability is difficult to achieve in any sociological research. (4)

One mark for each reason and one mark for appropriate development of each reason. Possible reasons include, for example, difficulty in reproducing the same context for the research; difficulty in selecting a sample with the same characteristics as in the original research; influence of different research personnel; etc.

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c) Explain why positivists favour research methods that are high in reliability, while interactionists are critical of these methods. (8)

0-4 Answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of what research methods are generally considered to be high in reliability e.g. questionnaires, structured interviews. Higher in the band there will be a limited attempt to explain why positivists favour these research methods.

5-8 There will be some attempt to present both the positivist and the interactionist case in relation to the question. This will be accurate and detailed at the top of the band.

d) Using the concepts of reliability and validity, assess the value of official statistics as a source of evidence in sociological research. (11)

0-4 A few general remarks about the use of official statistics in sociology, with little or no reference to the concepts of reliability and validity.

5-8 A more detailed account of the strengths and/or limitations of official statistics as a source of sociological evidence. At the top of the band, there must be some reference to reliability/validity, albeit perhaps in a superficial way.

9-11 The concepts of reliability and validity will provide the focus of the answer, with well-developed links to the use of official statistics in sociology. The assessment will be detailed and well informed at the top of the band.

3. Social inequality refers to the differences between people in terms of their opportunities and rewards. For example, some people have more money, more status, more power than others. When people are ranked hierarchically according to their possession of attributes such as income, wealth, power, age, gender and status, this is known as 'social stratification.'

Sociologists suggest that the origins of inequality can be found in the culture and social structures of societies. This is not to deny that there are innate and natural differences between people and that such differences contribute to social inequality. However, the sociological approach emphasizes how cultures and social structures can create and maintain individual inequalities.

Social inequality and stratification greatly affect the quality of people's lives. It can make the difference between, for example, working in a well-paid job or being unemployed, eating well or going hungry, enjoying good health and living to an old age or dying young.

a) What is meant by the term *status*? (2)

Status refers to the level of social honour or prestige given to someone by others, either as a result of the formal role they are playing in their social position, or for the individual skills and talents they display. Two marks for an accurate definition along

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these lines. One mark for a partial effort e.g. "the value society places on a job" or "the respect people get from others".

b) Describe **two** examples of how natural differences between people may contribute to inequality. (4)

One mark for each example and one mark for appropriate development of each example. Differences in, for example, intelligence, artistic and sporting talent, and physical attributes, may be seen as, in part, genetic. Credit answers that describe how such differences may contribute to social inequality e.g. through differential reward, access to power, status, etc.

c) Explain how people's chances of enjoying good health and living to an old age may be influenced by social inequality. (8)

0-4 Answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of some links between health and social class. Lower in the band this will be confined to a few commonsense observations. Higher in the band there will be some (limited) attempt to explain the links drawing on recognisable sociological concepts and ideas.

5-8 Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the links between health and social class. Higher in the band different explanations will be explored, perhaps focusing on the distinction between cultural versus structural approaches.

d) Assess sociological explanations of why inequality exists. (11)

0-4 At this level we may expect just a few basic observations about why inequality exists, with few or no references to appropriate sociological concepts and theories.

5-8 A basic account of one or more sociological explanations of why inequality exists. The focus is likely to be on particular theoretical perspectives e.g. functionalist, Marxist, Weberian, feminist. Higher in the band there will be some attempt at assessment, though not particularly detailed or incisive.

9-11 Two or more explanations will be considered in reasonable detail. The assessment will be sustained and well informed, particularly at the top of the band where there will also be a clear attempt to reach a balanced conclusion.