

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2012 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/23

Paper 2 (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.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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- 1 Sociology is based on the idea that each member of society is constrained and limited, to some greater or lesser extent, by the social world. One source of social constraint is the law. People obey the law all or most of the time, and this is partly because formal sanctions exist to punish law breakers. But even in areas of society where there are no laws or formal sanctions, individuals still generally conform to the norms and values of their community. *Customs*, conventions and fashions all may act as social constraints on the individual. For example, there is no law preventing men wearing dresses, yet few, if any, choose to do so.

Fear of informal sanctions may play a significant part in encouraging people to follow the expected patterns of behaviour in society. Yet even in situations where there are few, if any, sanctions to deter us from acting against the social norm, we often still choose to conform to group expectations about what is seen as appropriate behaviour. In such cases it would seem that social norms and values have become so deeply internalised in the individual that it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to act otherwise. However, social conformity may also occur because the individual is powerless to act in any other way. This may be particularly the case with disadvantaged groups, such as the poor, who have few resources with which to oppose the social constraints that shape their lives.

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

Customs are established ways of thinking and acting in societies. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'old ways of behaving in society' or 'the distinctive ways of a society'.

- (b) Describe two examples of informal sanctions. [4]

Many possible examples, including ostracism, gossiping, verbal abuse, withdrawal of privileges, etc. One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

- (c) Explain how individuals decide what is socially expected behaviour in any given situation. [8]

0–4 A few simple points about social expectations, or about the nature of socialisation, with only weak links to the question, would be worth 1 or 2 marks. A sound account of the process of socialisation from the functionalist perspective, but with some attempts to shape the material to fit the question, would fit the upper part of the band.

5–8 At this level, answers are likely to recognise the relevance of the interactionist perspective in answering the question. A sound account of the interactionist critique of the more deterministic views of socialisation (associated with functionalist theorists particularly), would fit the lower part of the band. To go higher, answers need to include reference to some specific interactionist ideas about how roles and relationships are negotiated in face-to-face encounters between people. The idea of 'taken for granted assumptions' might be explored, for example, or references might be made to Schutz's work on typifications or Garfinkel on social constructs and accounting procedures.

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(d) Assess the view that disadvantaged groups only accept the norms and values of society because they are powerless to act otherwise. [11]

0–4 A few simple points about the nature of social deprivation or about the powerlessness of disadvantaged groups, would be worth 1 or 2 marks. A limited attempt to explain why people in general accept the norms and values of society, would fit the higher part of the band.

5–8 A sound account of why people may accept the norms and values of society, with no specific reference to disadvantaged groups, would fit the lower part of the band. To go higher, the discussion must relate to disadvantaged groups specifically. A basic attempt to show why lack of power (alternatives and opportunities) may lead the socially disadvantaged to accept the normative order of society, would be worth 7 or 8 marks.

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the different reasons why the individual might accept the norms and values of society. This will include an explanation of the possible links between powerlessness and acquiescence. There will also be an assessment of the extent to which the socially disadvantaged accept the normative order of society through lack of choice or capacity for following alternative courses of action. To reach the top of the band, a clear conclusion must emerge about the extent to which the view expressed in the question can be supported.

2 Sociologists carry out research in order to collect data in a systematic and organised way. This data provides the sociologist with evidence to help them describe or explain the social world. Sociological research involves a series of clear stages, all of which need to be carefully considered in advance. Deciding on an area or subject for research is the first step. It is likely that the decision about what to study will be influenced by the values of the researcher, or by the values of the organisation that has agreed to fund the project.

The next stage involves developing the aims or hypothesis of the research and then choosing a research strategy. Choice of research methods is likely to be influenced by both practical and theoretical factors. Whether or not to use *triangulation* is another matter to be decided. Decisions also need to be made on how or whether to use sampling techniques and pilot studies. A pilot study is a small-scale trial run carried out before the main research. Further stages in the research process include conducting the research, interpreting the results and reporting the findings.

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

Triangulation refers to the combined use of different research techniques to complement and verify one another, in order to achieve robust research results. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'combining methods' or 'actions that might be taken by a researcher to verify her research'.

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(b) Describe two advantages of using a pilot study in sociological research. [4]

Advantages might include: overcomes potential problems with the wording of questions; may reveal that the research would be impractical or fruitless and thereby would save the researcher time and money carrying out the full study; might reveal the need to shorten the questionnaire or interview in order to complete the research in a timely manner; may help to highlight deficiencies in the researcher's interviewing skills. One mark for the advantage plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

(c) Explain how the values of the sociologist may influence the research process at different stages. [8]

0–4 A few general points about the research process, with no direct links to the debates about values, would be worth 1 or 2 marks. Answers that explore the role of values in general in sociological research i.e. without linking the material to specific stages of the research process, would fit the higher part of the band.

5–8 At this level, answers will distinguish between different stages of the research process and there will be some attempt to show how the values of the researcher may have an influence on the research at each stage. The stages of the research process that are most likely to be discussed include: choice of research topic, choice of method, collection of data, interpretation and presentation of data. Higher in the band, the answers will cover a good range of stages in the research process and/or show greater understanding of the relationship between values and research in sociology.

(d) Assess the role of theoretical factors in influencing the choice of research method. [11]

0–4 A few general points about research or research methods, with only tenuous links to the question, would gain 1 or 2 marks. Tangential responses that describe the strengths and limitations of particular research methods, could achieve up to 4 marks.

5–8 A sound account of some theoretical factors that may influence choice of research method, would fit the lower part of the band. To go higher, there must also be reference to other factors that may influence choice of research method. Any assessment at this level is likely to be weak and will occur through juxtaposition of different types of factor (theoretical factors versus practical factors, for example).

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the relationship between theoretical factors and choice of research method. There will also be an assessment of the strength of those links and this will include reference to other factors that may influence choice of research method. Lower in the band, much of the assessment may still rely on juxtaposition of contrasting factors. At the top of the band, however, some conclusions will emerge explicitly about the relative importance of the different factors, particularly theory, as influences on choice of research method.

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- 3 Sociologists have distinguished between absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty occurs where people have insufficient income to obtain the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. Examples of absolute poverty are rare in modern industrial societies today. Government welfare payments are available to ensure that every member of society has the minimum income needed to survive. However, people who are dependent on welfare payments still experience relative poverty. This is because their income is much less than the average for society as a whole.

There is a debate about whether the existence of welfare payments has created a culture of dependency among the poor. In one view, the availability of welfare payments is said to discourage the poor from working hard to find their own ways of escaping poverty. A different view sees the poor as trapped in a *cycle of poverty* from which it is very hard to break free through individual effort alone. People from some social groups are more likely to experience poverty than others. Women face a greater risk of poverty than men. Single mothers and older women living alone are two groups who have a particularly high risk of experiencing long periods of poverty.

- (a) What is meant by the term *cycle of poverty*? [2]

The cycle of poverty refers to the way in which the consequences of being poor act to reinforce each other, thereby making the problem of escaping poverty more intractable. So one consequence such as poor housing and the resulting insanitary conditions leads to absence from school, which leads to a poor job (or no job), which leads to low pay, and so. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'the ongoing problems a person in poverty faces' or 'the difficulties that result in a person becoming more and more trapped in poverty'.

NB. No marks for answers that confuse the cycle of poverty with the *life* cycle of poverty.

- (b) Describe two difficulties a poor person may face in trying to escape poverty. [4]

Many possible examples of difficulties a poor person may face in trying to escape poverty. These difficulties may be cultural, social and economic. Judge examples on merit. One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

- (c) Explain why women face a greater risk of poverty than men. [8]

0–4 A few general points about gender inequality, with only tenuous links to the question, would be worth 1 or 2 marks. Some attempt to identify particular groups of women who may be at greater risk of poverty, would also fit the lower part of the band. A basic account of one reason why women face a greater risk of poverty would trigger the top half of the band.

5–8 A sound account of several reasons why women face a greater risk of poverty, perhaps delivered in a rather list-like way, would fit the lower part of the band. An answer that has depth, but focuses narrowly on just one or two reasons, would also merit 5 or 6 marks. To go higher, answers must demonstrate a good understanding of a range of reasons why women face a greater risk of poverty. This might include some attempt to distinguish between different groups of women.

Reasons why women are at greater risk of poverty include: more likely to be made unemployed; interruption to employment/career through child rearing; abandonment or exploitation by male partners; dependency on male earnings; fewer opportunities to make pension provision; greater likelihood of being in low paid employment or part-time employment.

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(d) "The existence of poverty in modern industrial societies can be explained in terms of a culture of dependency." Assess this view. [11]

0–4 A few general points about the nature of poverty, with only weak links to the question, would be worth 1 or 2 marks. Answers that demonstrate an understanding of the idea of a 'culture of dependency', but lack any further development in relation to the question, would fit the higher part of the band. Answers that confuse the culture of dependency view with Lewis' culture of poverty thesis, and simply offer an account of Lewis' ideas by way of response to the question, would gain no more than 4 marks.

5–8 A sound account of the view that poverty can be explained in terms of a culture of dependency, with no further development, would gain 5 or 6 marks. Some attempt to contrast that view with one or more other explanations/theories of poverty, would trigger the top half of the band. At this level, any assessment is likely to be weak and may be confined to the juxtaposition of contrasting views of poverty.

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the culture of dependency view of poverty. There will also be a clear attempt to assess that view through considering other explanations/theories of poverty and/or by highlighting the inherent weaknesses in accounts of poverty that emphasise the fault of the individual. Lower in the band, the assessment may still be confined mainly to juxtaposition of different views of poverty. To reach the top of the band, however, the assessment must include some attempt to draw an overall conclusion about the value of the culture of dependency model in explaining the persistence of poverty in modern industrial societies.