

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**

**9699/23**

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

- Cambridge will not enter into discussions or correspondence in connection with these mark schemes.

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- 1 There are two main theories of social order. One theory is linked with functionalism and the other with the Marxist perspective. Functionalists, like Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, refer to the role of shared norms and values in maintaining cohesion in society. Durkheim distinguished between organic and mechanical solidarity and he developed the concept of *collective conscience* as a way of explaining the forces that unite people in society. Parsons argued that social order is created through the process of socialisation whereby people come to share the same views about what is acceptable behaviour.

By contrast, Marxists emphasise the importance of understanding conflict in society. They claim that weaker groups are pressured into accepting the rules of society by the powerful. For Marxists, social order is maintained through coercion and the influence of ruling class ideology. Althusser has written about the role of the repressive state apparatus (RSA) and the ideological state apparatus (ISA). Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony as a way of developing the Marxist analysis of how social order is achieved in capitalist societies.

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

Collective conscience is the term used by Durkheim to refer to the body of beliefs and sentiments common to the average members of society and which provides the foundation of social solidarity. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'shared values' or 'people who believe in the same things' or 'something people embrace and agree with'.

- (b) Describe two reasons why people generally conform to their expected social roles. [4]

The reasons offered are likely to include examples of relevant sanctions or rewards that might encourage people to conform to their expected social roles. One mark for the example and one mark for the development (2 x 2 marks).

- (c) Explain the role of the state in the Marxist theory of social order. [8]

0–4 A few simple points about Marxist theory, with no reference to political power, would fit the lower part of the band. Answers that demonstrate some understanding of the role of the state as a power source in modern industrial societies, without clear links to Marxist theory, may be worth 3 or 4 marks.

5–8 A basic account of the Marxist theory of social order, with some limited links to the role of the state, would fit the lower part of the band. To go higher, the answer needs to focus primarily on explaining what Marxists mean by the state and the role that the concept has in Marxist accounts of social order. Candidates who are able to discuss different strands of Marxist theory in relation to the role of the state are likely to merit full marks.

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**(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of the functionalist theory of social order. [11]**

0–4 A few simple assertions about the nature of society or social order may be worth 2 or 3 marks. Some observations about functionalist theory, with few clear links to social order, would trigger the top of the band.

5–8 A sound summary of the main tenets of functionalist theory, perhaps with links to social order left somewhat implicit, would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, the answer will provide a clear and explicit account of the functionalist theory of social order.

9–11 Answers at this level will provide a good account of the functionalist theory of social order. There will also be an attempt to assess the strengths and limitations of that theory. Lower in the band, the assessment may be delivered through the juxtaposition of the functionalist theory with other theories of social order, most likely being the Marxist theory. To reach the top of the band, however, the assessment of the functionalist view of social order must be explicit and sustained.

**2 An experiment is used to test a hypothesis by controlling a variable in order to discover which factor or factors are important in bringing about an effect. Experimental results are usually presented in numeric, quantifiable form. *Correlations* and causation can be identified, and the method is regarded as having a high degree of reliability.**

To better control and isolate the different variables, experiments often take place in a laboratory. However, the use of laboratory research in sociology raises complex ethical and practical issues. Field experiments are a less problematical alternative. Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) used the field experiment approach in a widely cited study examining the importance of teachers' attitudes to pupils' performance. Sociologists in the positivist tradition are most likely to favour the use of experiments in sociological research.

**(a) What do sociologists mean by the term *correlations*? [2]**

Correlations are patterns/relationships that can be discerned between two or more factors/results/variables that are thought to be related. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'something the sociologist wants tested' or 'a supposed relationship between things'.

**(b) Describe two problems in using laboratory experiments to study people. [4]**

A range of potential problems arise with laboratory experiments, covering theoretical, practical and ethical issues. One mark for a relevant problem and one mark for development (2 x 2 marks).

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**(c) Explain why a positivist might favour using experiments in sociological research. [8]**

0–4 Answers that identify a few simple reasons or points lacking full explanation why experiments might be used in sociological research may be worth 3 or 4 marks. Lower in the band, answers may be limited to a few weak points about sociological research in general or about the positivist perspective, without linking the material to experiments specifically.

5–8 At this level the answers will focus directly on the reasons why positivists specifically might favour the use of experiments in sociological research. Reasons why positivists favour the use of experiments include: ease of controlling and manipulating variables; ability to identify causation; reliability; scientific status of the research method; results can be quantified and correlations and comparisons drawn. Lower in the band, the range of points covered may be more restricted and/or the links to positivism might be implicit. Higher in the band, the links to theory will be well developed and a range of reasons why positivists would favour using experiments in sociological research will be covered.

**(d) Assess the claim that in sociological research quantitative data is superior to qualitative data. [11]**

0–4 A few simple points about sociological research in general would fit the lower part of the band. An answer that demonstrates a sound understanding of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data, without any further development, would trigger the top half of the band.

5–8 Answers that cover a range of points about quantitative data, without drawing any clear comparisons with qualitative data, may be worth 5 or 6 marks. Mark simple comparative answers at this level. To go higher, the comparison with qualitative data has to be made explicit. Answers that make relevant connections with the theoretical perspectives (quantitative data/positivism and qualitative data/interpretivism) are almost certain to merit the top part of this band, if not higher.

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data, and will identify strengths and limitations in relation to both types of data. There will also be a concerted attempt to assess the value of quantitative data in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may be delivered primarily through the juxtaposition of the positivist and interpretivist perspectives. Higher in the band, more of the assessment will be explicit and clear and a well-formulated conclusion will emerge about the overall usefulness of quantitative data relative to qualitative data.

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- 3 Many studies of social mobility have been carried out by sociologists in order to assess the extent to which class barriers are breaking down and *life chances* improving for less privileged groups such as the working class and some ethnic minorities. These studies usually distinguish between long-range and short-range mobility, and between inter-generational and intra-generational mobility. Occupation is often used in social mobility studies as an indicator of social class. However, there are various problems associated with using occupation as an indicator of class for the purposes of studying social mobility.

Some studies of social mobility have failed to include data on women's mobility. This represents a weakness with these studies, as patterns of female mobility tend to be different from men's. Likewise, ethnicity has not always been identified by researchers as an independent variable that may affect opportunities for social mobility.

Age is another factor that has not always been taken into account in studies of social mobility.

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

The term 'life chances' refers to the opportunities available to an individual or a group for social advancement through means such as educational attainment, health, material reward, and status mobility. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'having good career opportunities' or 'being able to advance in society' or 'achievement of a desirable standard of living'.

- (b) Describe two reasons why using occupation as an indicator of social class may give rise to problems when studying social mobility. [4]

Reasons why using occupation as an indicator of social class may give rise to problems when studying social mobility include: researchers may classify occupations differently and so the results of different mobility studies are not strictly comparable; a person's occupation may be only one factor influencing their level of income/wealth; the prestige and status associated with particular occupations can change over time, making it difficult to compare mobility studies from different eras; many people have no occupation as such. One mark for a relevant reason and one mark for development (2 x 2 marks).

- (c) Explain why it might be difficult for a working class person to achieve upward social mobility. [8]

0–4 A few general points about social class, with no clear links to mobility, may be worth 1 or 2 marks. Some simple assertions about the problems of achieving upward social mobility in general would trigger the upper part of the band.

5–8 Lower in the band, answers are likely to cover only one or two factors that may explain why it may be difficult for a working class person to achieve upward social mobility. A wider range of factors will be considered in answers that merit the top half of the band. This may include both material and cultural factors, though not necessarily with equal emphasis. Explicit comparisons with the life chances of other classes are likely to appear in the top part of this level.

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**(d) Assess the view that class barriers are breaking down in modern industrial societies. [11]**

- 0–4 A few general comments about the nature of social class might be worth 2 or 3 marks. An answer that demonstrates some awareness of what is meant by 'class barriers', with no further development, would trigger the top of the band or general comments about lowering class barriers.
- 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 or there may be one or two points well described. Higher in the band, answers will address directly the claim that class barriers are breaking down in modern industrial societies, though the discussion is likely to be fairly descriptive and possibly one-sided. A good descriptive account of the evidence from recent social mobility studies would merit the top of the band. Likewise, a well-informed descriptive account of the themes covered in post-modernist contributions to the debate about the significance of social class today would also fit the top of the band.
- 9–11 At this level, there will be a clear attempt to assess 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 barriers are breaking down in 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, the assessment should include 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.