

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2006 question paper

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/02

Paper 2 (Data Response), maximum raw mark 50

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and students, 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.

All Examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

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

The grade thresholds for various grades are published in the report on the examination for most IGCSE, GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level syllabuses.

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Page 2	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE A/AS LEVEL - OCT/NOV 2006	9699	2

1 One of the central concerns of Sociology is to explain how and why societies hold together. What prevents societies breaking down into lawlessness and chaos? This is known as the problem of social order. There are essentially two types of explanation of social order. One is associated with functionalist theory and the work of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons in particular. Functionalists focus on the role of shared norms and values in maintaining cohesion in society. The second explanation of social order derives from the Marxist tradition. For Marx, social order is the product of the balance of power between competing groups. This involves the powerful constrain weaker groups, and cohesion is sustained through economic pressures, political and legal coercion, and ruling class ideology. This type of order implies ongoing conflict and a struggle for change, rather than enduring stability. In Marxist theory, the State plays a key role in managing conflict and maintaining social control in the interests of the ruling class.

(a) What is meant by the term *ideology*?

[2]

Ideology may be defined as false or mistaken ideas that are imposed by one group on another to maintain its advantaged position in society. A definition along these lines would merit full marks. A more limited definition that is at least partially correct may be worth one mark.

(b) Describe two examples of how economic pressures may play a part in maintaining social order.

[4]

One mark for each relevant example identified (1 x 2) and one mark for describing adequately each example (1 x 2). Examples might include how the need to work in order to earn a living helps to produce conformity. Also, the way in which low wages are associated with denial of the means (material and cultural) that disadvantaged groups require in order to be able to oppose effectively the status quo.

(c) Explain the role of the State in managing conflict and maintaining social control.

[8]

0-4 A few rudimentary points about social control, with little or no reference to the State may be worth a few marks. To reach the top of the band, the focus of the answer would have to be on the role of the State in managing conflict.

5-8 The answer at this level will demonstrate some knowledge of the relevant sociological material on the role of the State, possibly through references to Marxist and pluralist theory. At the top of the band, the answer will be well informed in terms of the relevant theory and will provide a clear account of how the State may contribute to the maintenance of social order.

(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of the functionalist and Marxist theories of social order.

[11]

0-4 A few general comments about social order of limited sociological underpinning would fit the lower part of the band. A partial and very limited attempt to describe the functionalist or Marxist theory of social order may merit the top of the band.

5-8 A descriptive account of the two theories, although not necessarily balanced in the attention given to each theory, would fit the lower part of the band. At the top of the band, there will also be some attempt to highlight the limitations of each theory, although this may be undertaken only in a rather basic manner.

9-11 The two theories will be described with reasonable accuracy and the main limitations with each theory will be noted. There may also be some attempt to assess the relative merits of each theory. This may take the form of trying to achieve a balanced view about the usefulness of each theory as a contribution to the study of social order. At the top of the band, the assessment will be explicit and well conceived.

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2 In-depth interviews offer many advantages for researchers who are prepared to use them. However, they are not the easiest of research methods and are rarely quick to do. Preparation is vital, and the respondent needs to feel comfortable and given time to develop their answers. The researcher needs to be alert to the responses so that interesting leads are identified and followed up. In fact, this type of method will test the researcher's skills to the limit. The researcher not only has to keep focused on the topic, but must also be aware of how the personal characteristics of the researcher, such as age and ethnicity, might affect the outcome of the research and lead to 'interviewer effect'. Sociologists who favour qualitative research tend to use in-depth interviews.

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

Qualitative research refers to an in-depth study of people's meanings and understandings that is non-statistical and not capable of generalisation. A definition along these lines would be worth full marks. A more limited definition that is at least partially correct may be worth one mark.

(b) Describe two ways in which the personal characteristics of the researcher might affect the respondent's answers in an in-depth interview. [4]

One mark for each relevant personal characteristic identified (1 x 2) and one mark for describing adequately each example (1 x 2). Personal characteristics of the researcher that might affect the respondent's answers in an in-depth interview would include, for example, age, sex, ethnicity, class, appearance, language, mannerisms, etc.

(c) Explain why sociologists who favour qualitative research use in-depth interviews. [8]

0-4 A few general points about interviews in general might be worth one or two marks. To go higher within the band, the focus would have to be on in-depth (unstructured) interviews specifically, though at this level the candidate is unlikely to develop links with qualitative research.

5-8 Answers will demonstrate a sound understanding of the nature of in-depth interviews and the advantages that they offer for those who support qualitative research. At the top of the band, responses will show relevant theoretical understanding, possibly through accurate use of the concept of validity in the context of the question.

(d) 'The limitations of in-depth interviews far outweigh the advantages.' Assess this claim. [11]

0-4 Answers that are confined to a few comments on the advantages and/or limitations of interviews in general would fit this band.

5-8 A well-informed account of the strengths and limitations of interviews per se would fit the bottom of the band. To go higher, the answer must be focused on in-depth interviews specifically. Within this band, there may be little or no attempt at assessment.

9-11 Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the advantages and limitations of in-depth interviews and there will be an attempt to assess the claim on which the question is based. At the top of the band the assessment may be linked to an understanding of the importance of theoretical perspective (positivist, interpretivist) in answering the question.

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3 Some people are better placed in society than others in terms of income, wealth, and power. But this inequality is not randomly distributed between individuals, rather it is a feature of the social groups to which people belong. There are unequal groups that are defined by their relationship to each other in a hierarchy. So, for example, in a system of stratification based on social class we can identify a lower class, a middle class and an upper class. This pattern of class relationships tends to persist or repeat itself over time, so that the groups are likely to remain in their respective positions for at least several generations. Members of each group or stratum will have many common characteristics, including a shared culture and identity, common interests and similar life chances.

(a) What is meant by the term *life chances*?

[2]

Life chances may be defined as the opportunities available to a person to obtain the things defined as desirable and avoiding those things defined as undesirable in their society. A definition along these lines would be worth full marks. A more limited definition that is at least partially correct may be worth one mark.

(b) Describe two ways in which some groups have more power than others.

[4]

One mark for each relevant means identified (1 x 2) and one mark for describing adequately each example (1 x 2). Ways in which one group may have more power than another include differences in income, wealth, status, access to political office, religious authority, education, housing area, etc.

(c) Explain why class groups tend to remain in their respective positions for at least several generations.

[8]

0-4 Answers at this level are likely to make some general points about the class system without any strong links to the specific wording of the question. The more sociologically informed this type of answer is, the higher it should be placed within the band.

5-8 Lower in the band answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of why the pattern of class relationships tends to repeat itself over time. Higher in the band the understanding will be more developed and may cover a wider range of relevant points.

(d) 'Class differences are no longer relevant.' Assess this post-modernist claim.

[11]

0-4 A few disjointed comments about class divisions would fit the bottom of the band. Higher in the band the candidate may attempt to say whether class differences are becoming less significant today, though the points rendered are likely to rest more on assertion than sociological reasoning.

5-8 A solid descriptive account of the nature of class divisions today, possibly with references to familiar material such as the embourgeoisement and proletarianisation theses, would fit this band. At the top of the band, there may be some attempt at assessment, though it will be very basic at this level.

9-11 As for the previous band, though now the assessment will be explicit and sustained. The answer should also demonstrate at least a basic understanding of the post-modernist case for claiming that class differences are becoming less significant today. At the top of the band, the focus will very much be on discussing the post-modernist claims.