

MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2013 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/12

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

Cambridge will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2013 series for most IGCSE, GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level components and some Ordinary Level components.

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Section A

1 ‘Functionalist theories underestimate the amount of conflict in modern industrial societies.’ Explain and assess this view. [25]

- 0–6** A few assertions about the nature of social conflict, with little sociological provenance, might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A simple attempt to explain the functionalist notion of value consensus, with only weak links to the question, would be worth 5 or 6 marks.
- 7–12** Answers that are confined to a simple account of functionalist theory would merit the lower part of the band. To go higher, there needs to be some attempt to explain the importance of social harmony (or the notion of value consensus) in functionalist thinking about society. At this level, there need be no attempt to distinguish between functionalist theorists or to assess the view expressed in the question.
- 13–18** A sound account of the functionalist theory of social order, including perhaps discussion of the concept of value consensus, would trigger this band. Higher in the band there will be an attempt to explain why some sociologists believe that there may be less consensus in society than functionalists think is the case. This may be achieved through discussing contrasting theories of social order, such as those within the Marxist and feminist perspectives. To reach the higher part of the band there must be some assessment of the view expressed in the question, though at this level the points made are likely to be somewhat basic.
- 19–25** Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the functionalist view of social order. Discussion of different strands of functionalist theory might be one feature that distinguishes answers meriting the top of the band. To merit this band, there will also be a sustained and well-informed attempt to assess the view expressed in the question. Lower in the band, the assessment may be delivered by contrasting different theories of social order. Higher in the band, the assessment may move beyond juxtaposition of different theoretical perspectives to offer a more direct analysis of the extent to which functionalist theories have underestimated the amount of conflict in modern industrial societies.

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2 ‘Sociologists should use their research to help disadvantaged groups in society.’ Explain and assess this view. [25]

- 0–6** A few simple points about the nature of sociological research in general might be worth two or three marks. A basic response stating the purposes for which sociologists should use their research, based mainly on assertion, would fit the top half of the band.
- 7–12** A general discussion of different views about the possible uses of sociological research, with few links to appropriate sociological references and theories, would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, answers will demonstrate at least a rudimentary understanding of the debates between those who favour a value-neutral approach to sociological research and those who argue for value-commitment. At this level, there may be little or no evidence of assessment.
- 13–18** A sound account of the ideas of those who have argued that sociologists should use their research to help the disadvantaged groups in society (Marxists, feminists, C. Wright Mills, Becker, Goffman), would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, there will also be some attempt to assess the view that sociologists should be aligned with the interests of the disadvantaged. However, the assessment may lack depth at this level and rely on the juxtaposition of different views about the correct aims and uses of sociological research.
- 19–25** Answers in this band will demonstrate a good understanding of the arguments and theoretical perspectives that support the idea of a value committed sociology. There will also be some attempt to assess the view that sociologists should use their research to help disadvantaged groups in society. Lower in the band, much of the assessment may be through the juxtaposition of thinkers/theories supporting opposite positions in the debate about values in sociology. Higher in the band, the assessment will be more explicit and better developed; for example, candidates may question whose interests sociological research serves, who may benefit from attempts to help the disadvantages, and what values underpin the idea of an active/engaged form of sociology.

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Section B

3 'The extent to which official statistics provide an objective account of social reality has been exaggerated.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

- 0–6** A few simple points about secondary data in general would be worth three or four marks. A basic account of what official statistics entail would merit the top half of the band.
- 7–12** Lower in the band answers are likely to offer a basic outline of a few strengths and/or limitations of official statistics. Answers that are confined to an account of a single study in which official statistics have been used (Durkheim's study of suicide, for example) are also likely to fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, a wider range of strengths and limitations of official statistics will be noted, though the answer may lack specific references to the issue of objectivity. Consideration of relevant theoretical issues overall will be rudimentary, at best, at this level.
- 13–18** Answers that merit this band will demonstrate a sound understanding of the strengths and limitations of official statistics. Higher in the band, there will also be a clear focus on the idea that official statistics may provide a distorted picture of social reality. This aspect of the answer may be developed through references to appropriate examples, such as crime and the 'dark figure' or suicide rates and the social influences on the work of coroners. Likewise, links may be made to the debate between positivists and interpretivists about the value of using official statistics in sociological research. To reach the top half of the band, there will be some assessment of the view expressed in the question, though the conclusions reached are likely to be lacking in depth.
- 19–25** Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of using official statistics in sociological research. A range of practical and theoretical points will be covered, possibly supported with well-chosen references to relevant studies. The thinking behind the claim that the extent to which official statistics provide an objective account of social reality has been exaggerated will be explained accurately. There will also be a clear attempt to assess the value of using official statistics in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may lack some sharpness and detail. Higher in the band, the assessment will be well developed and reach coherent and plausible conclusions that focus directly on the issues raised by the question.

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4 ‘Qualitative research methods allow too much scope for the sociologist to influence the research findings.’ Explain and assess this view. [25]

- 0–6** A few simple points about sociological research methods in general may be worth two or three marks. A basic attempt to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research would fit the top half of the band.
- 7–12** At the lower end of the band, answers may be limited to a few general points about the – strengths and/or limitations of qualitative research in general. Better responses at this level may distinguish between different methods of qualitative research. At the top of the band, there will also be an attempt to explain some of the strengths and limitations of qualitative research, although the emphasis is likely to be on practical factors rather issues of theory. Answers at this level may be mainly or wholly descriptive.
- 13–18** Answers that merit this band will provide a sound account of the strengths and limitations of qualitative research. Both practical and theoretical factors will be considered, though not necessarily with equal emphasis. Higher in the band, the handling of theory is likely to be more assured. To reach the top half of the band, there must also be an attempt to assess the view that qualitative research methods allow too much scope for the sociologist to influence the research findings. However, the assessment may lack depth at this level and is likely to be confined to a juxtaposition of the respective claims of those who support quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively.
- 19–25** Answers that merit this band will demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of qualitative research. This might include references to particular types of qualitative research methods, though the main part of the discussion may remain at a more general level. There will also be a sustained and well-informed assessment of the value of using qualitative research methods in sociology. Lower in the band, the assessment may rely mainly on a juxtaposition of arguments for qualitative versus quantitative research. Higher in the band, however, the assessment will be less generic and incisive points will emerge about the view that qualitative research methods allow too much scope for the sociologist to influence the research findings. Reward candidates who use references to relevant studies to show the type of context in which qualitative research methods might be a particularly appropriate choice. Common assumptions about the strengths and limitations of qualitative research may also be challenged and debated. Answers that discuss effectively the relative merits of different examples of qualitative research methods, as part of the overall response to the question, are likely to trigger this band.

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Section C

5 ‘Defining social class only in terms of property ownership fails to reflect the complex nature of class relationships today.’ Explain and assess this view. [25]

0–6 A few simple assertions about the nature of social class divisions may be worth two or three marks. A very limited account of how sociologists define the concept of social class, with no further development, would merit the top of the band.

7–12 Answers at this level will demonstrate some awareness of the sociological theory (Marxist, primarily) that underpins the idea that property ownership is the key factor in defining social class. A basic account of Marx’s theory of class would fit the lower part of the band. If this is complemented by a discussion of one or more other approaches to defining social class, a mark in the top half of the band would be merited. There may be little or no evidence of assessment at this level.

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 critical review of the traditional Marxist theory of class, or it may focus on a wider range of approaches to defining social class. Lower in the band, the response may be largely or wholly descriptive. For example, answers may be confined to a sound account of different ways of defining social class, including through reference to property ownership. To reach the top half of the band, however, there must be an attempt to assess the claim on which the question is based. The assessment may be limited to a few basic observations about the nature of class relationships today, with the implication that property ownership may be too narrow a way of defining class in modern industrial societies today.

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 or embourgeoisement, 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 to class analysis of post-modernist writers. Towards the top of the band, answers will provide clear and well informed conclusions about the relevance of defining social class in terms of property ownership in the context of modern industrial societies today.

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6 'People in poverty could easily attain a higher standard of living if they had the right attitude and determination.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

- 0–6** A few poorly developed points about the nature of poverty may characterise answers that fit the lower half of the band. Better responses at this level may offer a simple account of one or two explanations of poverty, with no direct links to the question as such.
- 7–12** A basic account of one or two sociological explanations of poverty, with no direct reference to the question, would trigger the lower part of the band. A more developed account would go higher, but to reach the top of the band the answer must demonstrate some understanding of the sociological thinking underpinning the view expressed in the question. Answers at this level may be largely or wholly descriptive.
- 13–18** At this level, different sociological explanations of poverty will be described accurately and there may be some reference to appropriate studies. There will also be an attempt to address directly the issues raised by the question, including the notion that the right attitudes and determination may be sufficient for the poor to lift themselves out of poverty. Lower in the band, the idea that poverty can be explained in terms of personal deficiencies may be accepted largely uncritically. To go higher in the band, however, there must be some attempt to assess the view expressed in the question, though the analysis may be rather basic at this level. The distinction between cultural and structural accounts of the causes of poverty may be used to good effect to provide a theoretical framework for the discussion, particularly in answers at the top of the band.
- 19–25** Answers meriting this band will feature a wider ranging and more incisive assessment of the view expressed in the question. The idea that poverty may be linked to personal deficiencies among the poor will be explained fully and may be illustrated with reference to appropriate thinkers and/or studies. There will also be a sustained attempt to assess New Right thinking about poverty. Answers are likely to identify a range of factors, in addition to supposed individual failings among the poor, which make it difficult for those in poverty to escape their situation. Higher in the band, the analysis will reach beyond a basic juxtaposition of different theories of poverty to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the issues by, for example, discussing the significance for the question of different definitions of poverty or recognising that the poor are not necessarily a 'fixed' or a homogeneous group.