

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2007 question paper

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/01

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.

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.

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

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Section A

1 "The functionalist model of how society works has many limitations and few strengths." Explain and assess this view.

- 0-6 An answer based on a few general observations about the nature of society with little or no discernible sociological knowledge would fit the lower half of the band. Higher in the band the discussion will remain weak, but there may be a few elementary references to functionalist theory.
- 7-12 A simple explanatory account of the functionalist model of society, with no corresponding assessment, would merit the lower part of the band. At the higher end, the explanation of the functionalist model will either be more developed and/or there will be a simple attempt at assessment.
- 13-18 Both parts of the question will be addressed at this level, although the assessment may be rather limited in answers that merit the lower end of the band. The functionalist model will be outlined with references to relevant concepts such as value consensus, the organic analogy, functional needs, system integration, manifest and latent functions, and social equilibrium. The contributions of relevant functionalist sociologists, such as Durkheim, Parsons, and Merton may figure in well-planned answers. At the top of the band, the assessment will be coherent and sustained, though it may lack depth and could rely mainly on juxtaposing functionalist theory with one or more other sociological theories.
- 19-25 Answers at this level will demonstrate a detailed and accurate understanding of the functionalist model of society. The assessment will be explicit and detailed; it will also attempt to consider both the strengths and the limitations of functionalist theory. At the top of the band, answers may be distinguished by a sophisticated line of argument in response to the question or possibly by skill in contrasting functionalist theory with other sociological perspectives.

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**2 "Human behaviour is unpredictable and so it follows that sociology cannot be a science."
Explain and assess this view.**

- 0-6 Vague discussion linking sociology and science, with little development or linkage to the question would qualify for this band. At the top end, there will be some evidence that the material used is drawn from an appropriate sociological source, though the limitations of the answer will be obvious in the lack of detail and range of points offered.
- 7-12 Answers at this level will demonstrate a basic awareness of the main features of the debate about the status of sociology and the links between the subject and the logic and methods of the natural sciences. However, the specific wording of the question may be addressed only indirectly through a general account of the positivist perspective. At the top of the band, there will be a clear account of the positivist position and at least a rudimentary attempt to contrast it with alternative perspectives, most likely the contribution of those in the interactionist tradition.
- 13-18 A sound account of the positivist versus anti-positivist debate, with limited analytical depth, would merit the lower part of the band. To reach the top of the band, the answer must in addition address the specific wording of the question i.e. by considering whether human behaviour is unpredictable and, if it is to some degree, then what are the implications of this for the debate about the claims of sociology to be a science. However, this aspect of the answer may lack development and sophistication at this level.
- 19-25 The discussion of the positivist versus anti-positivist debate will be detailed and well informed. The answer will also address the specific issues raised by the question by focusing, at least in part, on the supposed unpredictability of human behaviour and its methodological and philosophical implications for sociology. Sophistication may be demonstrated in many ways, including by questioning the nature of scientific method and distinguishing between the issues of whether sociology can and should emulate the method of the natural sciences. Answers that pick up on nuances of this kind are likely to merit the top of the band.

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Section B

3 "Quantitative research methods are superior to qualitative research methods in terms of the objectivity and usefulness of the data collected." Explain and assess this view.

- 0-6 A few general points about sociological research methods with little or no linkage to the question would merit a mark at the lower end of the band. Higher in the band there will be some evidence that the candidate understands the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods, but the answer will lack development and fail to address the issues raised by the question.
- 7-12 Answers that demonstrate a sound understanding of the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods would merit the lower part of the band even though they may fail to address the specific issues raised by the question. Higher in the band, however, there will be an attempt to explain why it might be thought that quantitative research methods are superior to qualitative research methods in terms of the objectivity and usefulness of the data collected. To reach the top of the band, there is no requirement to assess the view expressed in the question.
- 13-18 The view expressed in the question will be both explained and assessed in answers that reach this level. At the lower end of the band, however, the assessment may be very limited in range and/or insight. A weaker response at this level might rely primarily on a general run through of the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research methods. A better answer would focus more on the issues of objectivity and the usefulness of the data collected using the respective methodological approaches. However, there may be little attempt to explore the different dimensions of the concept of objectivity or to consider what might constitute 'usefulness' in relation to research data.
- 19-25 As for the top of the previous band except that the explanation of the view expressed in the question will be more detailed and precise. Also, the assessment will be more refined and/or sustained. At the top of the band we might expect candidates to recognise that claims to one methodological approach being superior to another are problematical on a number of grounds. Moreover, it will be recognised that both types of methodological approach give rise to problems of objectivity and that defining what is meant by 'usefulness' in relation to research data is not at all straightforward.

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4 "The theoretical approach favoured by the sociologist is the main factor influencing his or her choice of research methods." Explain and assess this claim.

- 0-6 Lower in the band answers may be confined to a few disparate points about research methods with barely any discernible link to the question. Answers at the top of the band will be similarly limited except that there will be some rudimentary evidence that the candidate understands that this is a question about the factors that influence choice of research methods in sociology.
- 7-12 Lower in the band the candidate will be able to explain at a basic level how choice of research method may be influenced by the theoretical approach favoured by the sociologist. Higher in the band there will also be limited awareness of other factors that may influence choice of research method, such as funding, practicality, ethics, nature of the research topic, etc. There may be little or no attempt to assess the issues raised by the question at this level.
- 13-18 The link between theoretical approach and choice of research methods will be explained clearly and accurately at this level. Other factors that may influence choice of methods will also be reviewed. There will be an attempt to assess whether the view expressed in the question is valid, though the analysis may lack penetration at the lower end of the band especially.
- 19-25 As for the previous band, though the assessment will be sustained and well informed. Candidates will demonstrate a very good understanding of why theoretical approach is an important influence on choice of research method and may illustrate their knowledge through reference to several sociological perspectives. Examples from relevant studies might be used skilfully to develop the answer at this level. At the top of the band, clear and well-supported conclusions will be reached about how important theoretical approach is in influencing choice of research methods.

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Section C

5 "Class background no longer restricts people's opportunities by limiting them to a particular pattern of life and range of experiences." How far is this view supported by sociological arguments and evidence?

- 0-6 Answers that are confined to a few vague assertions about the nature of social class would merit the lower part of the band. A few general points of sociological relevance about the nature of social class would be sufficient to trigger the top of the band.
- 7-12 At this level the candidate will demonstrate awareness that the question is inviting a discussion about the significance of social class in contemporary society and whether the influence of class background on life chances has diminished in recent times. At the lower end of the band, however, only a faltering attempt will be made to address these issues. Higher in the band the discussion will be more coherent and material of an identifiably sociological nature will be used to develop the answer. The analysis at this level will be rudimentary and answers will tend to be largely descriptive.
- 13-18 At this level a range of sociological arguments and evidence will be used to address the issues raised by the question. Lower in the band the candidates may rely on some rather dated material, such as the studies of embourgeoisement and proletarianisation. The links between this material and the question may also not be particularly well developed. Higher in the band the sources used to develop the answer will be more contemporary and better focused on the specific issues raised by the question. Studies of education, social mobility, class attitudes and culture, and consumption patterns would be relevant sources of evidence to use in developing a strong response to the question.
- 19-25 A characteristic of answers at this level will be a very good understanding of the context of the question and the issues raised. This may include awareness that the view expressed in the question has strong links with the post-modernist assessment of the contemporary significance of social class. Indeed, a well-informed answer that is structured around the post-modernist contribution is likely to score highly within this band. Whatever sociological sources are used in developing a response, however, to merit this band the candidate must demonstrate strong analytical skills by offering a sustained assessment of the view expressed in the question.

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6 "Governments and the wealthy benefit from the existence of the poor and this is the main reason why poverty continues to exist." Explain and assess this view.

- 0-6 Answers that are limited to a few vague assertions about the nature of poverty would be worth a few marks only. A better answer within this band would demonstrate some sociological knowledge about the topic of poverty, albeit without necessarily linking the material to the question as set.
- 7-12 A largely commonsense response that at least addresses some of the issues raised by the question might merit 7 or 8 marks. A better answer within this band would demonstrate a basic knowledge of at least one sociological explanation for the existence of poverty. To reach the top of the band, there certainly needs to be some referencing of the answer to appropriate sociological sources. There should also be a basic attempt to explain the statement in the question, though the points made will lack sophistication at this level.
- 13-18 Candidates at this level will have clearly recognised that the question provides an opportunity to discuss sociological explanations for the existence of poverty. Lower in the band the answers may be confined to a largely descriptive run through of two or more explanations, which would most likely include the culture of poverty thesis and some variant of Marxist theory. Higher in the band the sociological explanations will be more tailored to the specific issues raised by the question and the concepts of power and social class will figure in the analysis, albeit in a way that lacks sharpness and/or detail.
- 19-25 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of different sociological explanations of poverty and this will be used to assess the relative importance of power and social class in making sense of why poverty continues to exist. A very good answer based on an assessment of the cultural versus structural explanations of poverty would trigger this band, but only at the lower level. To go higher the analysis would also have to be very specific in explaining why it may not be in the interests of both governments and the wealthy to see an end to poverty. Answers that focus only on the supposed benefits that the ruling class derive from the poor should not be awarded marks at the top of the band; the links between governments and the continued existence of poverty also has to be explored to merit full marks.