

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

GCE Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the November 2004 question paper

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/02

Paper 2 (Principles and Methods 2),
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 initially instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began. Any substantial changes to the mark scheme that arose from these discussions will be recorded in the published *Report on the Examination*.

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 discussion or correspondence in connection with these mark schemes.

CIE is publishing the mark schemes for the November 2004 question papers for most IGCSE and GCE Advanced Level syllabuses.



Grade thresholds taken for Syllabus 9699 (Sociology) in the November 2004 examination.

	maximum mark available	minimum mark required for grade:		
		A	B	E
Component 2	50	38	35	21

The thresholds (minimum marks) for Grades C and D are normally set by dividing the mark range between the B and the E thresholds into three. For example, if the difference between the B and the E threshold is 24 marks, the C threshold is set 8 marks below the B threshold and the D threshold is set another 8 marks down. If dividing the interval by three results in a fraction of a mark, then the threshold is normally rounded down.

November 2004

GCE AS/A LEVEL

MARK SCHEME

MAXIMUM MARK: 50

SYLLABUS/COMPONENT: 9699/02

SOCIOLOGY

Principles and Methods 2

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1. Sociologists are strongly opposed to accounts of social behaviour that rely on common sense. They point out that in everyday life ‘common sense’ is just a phrase people use to claim that what they are saying is beyond question. But the claim is not backed up by any systematic appeal to evidence; if it were it would cease to be common sense. By contrast sociological reasoning lays out the steps of an argument systematically, shows where and how the argument is supported by evidence, and states how the evidence was collected.

Furthermore, sociologists attempt to examine the assumptions on which their own research and arguments are based, so that they are not misled by irrational and unsupported ideas. They also make their work available for criticism and review by other sociologists so that any *bias* may be detected; common sense simply claims that it is common sense, and therefore cannot be challenged.

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

Bias may be defined as the selective use of evidence or arguments that distorts or conceals the truth (= 2 marks). One mark for a poorly expressed or otherwise limited effort that has some merit e.g. ‘a one-sided view’ or ‘a personal opinion only’.

- (b) Describe two possible sources of bias in a piece of sociological research? [4]

One mark for identifying each appropriate way (= 2 marks) and one mark for the development of each example (= 4 marks). Possible sources of bias include, for example, declaring personal values, providing details of funding and other institutional support for the research, giving a full account of the way in which research was conducted, and full publication of research data so that research can be checked and/or repeated by others.

- (c) Explain how the use of the hypothetico-deductive method may make sociology superior to common sense. [8]

Following the hypothetico-deductive method forces the researchers to think systematically, define terms carefully, and test ideas against evidence. At the same time, following this method shows other sociologists how the research was conducted so that they can check the arguments and findings.

- 0-4 Lower in the band answers will be limited to one or two vague points that are broadly relevant to the question. Higher in the band some knowledge and understanding of the hypothetico-deductive method will be demonstrated, though this will be applied to answering the question as set only in a very basic way.

- 5-8 A good account of the hypothetico-deductive method with some attempt to show how it makes sociology superior to common sense would merit 5 or 6 marks. However, the explanation will be basic and possibly mostly implicit.

To go higher (7 or 8 marks), the explanation offered has to be well informed and explicit.

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(d) **Assess the view that sociological research can never be as rigorous and objective as research in the natural sciences.** [11]

0-4 Answers are likely to be based on assertion, perhaps with a few vague sociological references of some relevance to the question. Answers that merely describe various sociological research methods will also feature at this level.

5-8 Some knowledge of relevant debates, such as those between positivists and interpretivists, will be demonstrated. However, the approach will be limited, either because it is very descriptive and/or somewhat deficient in terms of detail and accuracy. Candidates who write exclusively about the nature of research in the natural sciences, with no reference to the implications for sociological research, are likely to trigger this mark band at the lower end.

9-11 Answers will focus on the question as set and provide a sustained and well-informed assessment of the claims of sociological research to scientific status. The most likely approach will involve an accurate and incisive account of the positivist versus interpretivist positions on the issues of objectivity and scientific rigour in sociology. Candidates who question the degree of rigour and objectivity in the natural sciences, and then link this to appropriate debates about the scientific status of sociology, are also likely to feature in this band.

2. **Many sociologists who support the *interpretivist* perspective favour participant observation as a research method. This is where researchers join the life of the people they are studying, not only to be able to observe people in their natural surroundings, but also to learn to see things and feel things as they do. One of the worries of participant observers is ‘sympathetic bias’: the idea that they may be influenced to give a kindly but biased account of research subjects who have become friends. Indeed, the more successful they are in becoming members, the more difficult it is for them to avoid sympathetic bias.**

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

Interpretivism is the name for a sociological perspective that focuses on the study of *meaning* as the key to understanding the attitudes and behaviour of people in society (= 2 marks). Some reference to the emphasis interpretivists give to studying ‘meaning’ or ‘subjectivity’ is required to justify two marks. One mark for a poorly expressed or otherwise limited answer that has some merit e.g. ‘a sociologist who believes in qualitative research’ or ‘a sociologist who rejects scientific approaches to research’.

(b) **Describe two difficulties that a sociologist may face in gaining entry to a group they wish to study.** [4]

One mark for identifying each appropriate difficulty (= 2 marks) and one mark for the development of each example (= 4 marks). Difficulties may include, for example: the group not wanting to be studied; difficulty making contact with a suitable sample; age, gender or class differences between the researcher and the group make it difficult to undertake covert observation effectively; some members of the group may resent the presence of a researcher; there may be legal and/or ethical constraints preventing the researcher fully participating in group activities.

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(c) **Explain why supporters of participant observation believe that it is important to study people in their natural surroundings.** [8]

0-4 Answers at the lower end will be restricted to a few elementary points about participant observation. Higher in the band we can expect a largely descriptive account of the strengths (and perhaps weaknesses too) of participant observation studies. Little attempt will be made to shape the material to answer the question as set.

5-8 Lower in the band a basic attempt will be made to explain why supporters of participant observation believe it is important to study people in their natural surroundings. This will be linked to a generally sound account of participant observation as a research method. Higher in the band the explanation offered will be detailed and incisive, possibly making reference to the perceived limitations of other types of sociological research and therefore illustrating the supposed superiority of participant observation studies.

(d) **Assess the arguments of those who criticise the use of participant observation in sociological research.** [11]

0-4 Very short or largely irrelevant answers will trigger the lower part of the band. Towards the top of the band, answers will identify one or two appropriate criticisms but lack depth or extension.

5-8 A largely descriptive account of the positivist versus interpretivist debate would trigger this band, but would need to be well done to merit 7 or 8 marks. Any assessment in this type of response is likely to be implicit, with little or no attempt to develop a reasoned conclusion.

9-11 The answer is likely to be couched in terms of the positivist critique of interpretive sociology, but will also include some attempt to evaluate the coherence and persuasiveness of the arguments against participant observation studies. The assessment will lack sophistication at the lower end of the band, while at the higher end it will be reasoned and sustained throughout the answer.

3. **Functionalists claim that everyone's interests are served by a social system that is stable and efficient in producing goods and services. A stable and efficient society has to have leaders, managers and so on to organise things on behalf of others, and these people have to be adequately rewarded. Therefore *inequality* is an important part of a stable and efficient society, and hence inequality is to the benefit of everyone.**

By contrast, conflict theorists argue that society is made up of groups with different interests, and social life is a struggle between groups trying to impose their interests on others. Social stability mostly benefits the rich and powerful groups in society.

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

There are several possible definitions. For example, inequality may be defined as 'the structured distribution of resources in society that systematically favours some groups over others' (= 2 marks). One mark for a poorly expressed or otherwise limited answer that has some merit e.g. 'some people are poor while others are rich' or 'wealth is distributed unfairly'.

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(b) Describe two types of inequality in modern industrial societies. [4]

One mark for identifying each appropriate type of inequality (= 2 marks) and one mark for the development of each example (= 4 marks). Types of inequality include, for example, those based on age, gender, ethnicity, caste, class, and disability. Also reward appropriate examples from specific societies.

(c) Explain why functionalists consider that inequality is an important part of a stable and efficient society. [8]

0-4 A few common sense points with little or no reference to functionalism would merit one or two marks. A better answer at this level would, for example, provide a general descriptive account of the functionalist theory of social order that contains a few appropriate references to social inequality.

5-8 Answers at this level will be focused on the question as set. A useful approach would be to outline Davis and Moore's theory of stratification, though similar ground could be covered through a discussion of the work of other functionalists such as Durkheim (division of labour and anomie) and Parsons (systems integration and pattern variables). N.B: An *assessment* of functionalist theory is not required to answer this question successfully.

(d) Assess the claim that differences in status and wealth mostly benefit the rich and powerful groups in society. [11]

0-4 A common sense or polemical response would trigger this band. If this were linked to a few relevant sociological points, albeit poorly expressed and lacking development, a mark at the top of the band would be justified.

5-8 An appropriate interpretation of the question will be offered, and most likely this will be in terms of the Marxist theory of stratification. The response at this level is likely to be mostly or wholly descriptive. Any hint of assessment allied to a solid descriptive answer would justify 7 or 8 marks.

9-11 The assessment will be explicit and, at the top of the band, sustained and well reasoned. A clear and well-informed understanding of why inequality may be seen to benefit the rich and powerful will be provided, and this view will be evaluated through, for example, juxtaposition with contrasting theories e.g. functionalist, New Right, post-modernist, etc. An alternative form of evaluation would involve criticising the internal coherence of, for example, Marxist or feminist accounts of social inequality.