

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2006 question paper

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/01

Paper 1

Maximum 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*.

The minimum marks in these components needed for various grades were previously published with these mark schemes, but are now instead included in the Report on the Examination for this session.

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

CIE is publishing the mark schemes for the May/June 2006 question papers for most IGCSE and GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level syllabuses and some Ordinary Level syllabuses.

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Section A

**1 “Social order is created through the interaction of economic and ideological forces.”
Explain and assess this view.**

- 0-6 An answer that is confined to a few oblique remarks about social order would trigger the bottom of the band. However, if this were linked to a very basic understanding that the question is focusing on the Marxist theory of social order, a mark at the top of the band would be justified.
- 7-12 A basic account of one sociological theory (functionalist, Marxist, feminist, etc.) of how social order is created would fit the bottom of the band. A slightly more developed account of the Marxist theory of social order would go higher in the band. An answer that provides a good account of sociological theories of social order in general, but without reference to Marxist theory, can achieve a maximum of twelve marks only.
- 13-18 A good descriptive account of the Marxist theory of social order would fit the bottom of the band. To go higher, there has to be an attempt to assess Marxist theory, albeit that within this band the analysis will be fairly limited. The assessment may be achieved through juxtaposition with other theories of social order. Theoretical arguments and relevant empirical evidence may also be used to question the usefulness of the Marxist theory of social order.
- 19-25 At this level a detailed account of the Marxist theory of social order, with specific reference to the role of both economic and ideological forces, will be complemented by a clear and accurate assessment of the strengths and/or limitations of that theory. The assessment may be through juxtaposition with contrasting sociological perspectives on social order, though we should expect to see more direct and explicit analysis in answers that merit the top of the band. Another feature of high quality answers may be references to different strands of Marxist theory, including, for example, the contributions of Althusser and Gramsci.

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2 Assess the view that interpretive theories are more relevant than structural theories for understanding modern societies.

- 0-6 An answer that is limited to a few simple points about sociological theory would fit the bottom of the band. A marginally better answer at this level would contain a few broadly accurate references to a specific theory or theories, though without coherent development in the context of the question. Theory in the context of the question refers to the main sociological perspectives e.g. functionalist, Marxist, feminist, interactionist, post-modernist, etc.
- 7-12 A descriptive account of a single sociological theory would merit a mark in the lower part of the band. A similar account of more than one theory could reach the top of the band. At this level there may be little or no attempt to address the specific issue of the relevance of sociological theories for understanding modern societies. An answer that focuses on the positivist versus interpretivist debate, with little or no reference to specific sociological theories, should be capped at a maximum of twelve marks.
- 13-18 At the bottom of the band the bulk of the answer is likely to consist of a descriptive account of two or more sociological theories. However, there must be some attempt to assess the relevance of these theories for understanding modern societies in order to justify a mark in this band. The assessment is likely to be very basic at the lower end of the band. At the top of the band, the assessment will be a little more developed, though still limited in range and/or depth.
- 19-25 At this level a number of sociological theories will be discussed and an explicit attempt will be made to assess their relevance for understanding modern societies. At the bottom of the band the assessment may be confined to the standard textbook accounts of the strengths and limitations of each theory. Higher in the band the answer should focus directly on the issue of 'understanding modern societies' and this may be achieved through, for example, focusing on particular features of modern society and/or by referring to specific sociological studies.

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Section B

3 Assess the view that qualitative research methods are too subjective to produce useful sociological research.

- 0-6 An answer that is confined to a few isolated points about research methods may fit the bottom of the band. If an answer of this kind also demonstrates a limited understanding of what is meant by qualitative research, a mark higher in the band would be justified.
- 7-12 A simple account of one or two research methods (questionnaires, interviews, participant observation, etc.) may trigger a mark in the lower part of the band. A basic descriptive account of qualitative research methods specifically would merit a mark at the top of the band.
- 13-18 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the specific features of qualitative research and there will be an attempt to assess the claim that such methods are too subjective to produce useful sociological research. The assessment will be very rudimentary at the lower end of the band, perhaps limited to a few general observations about the strengths and/or limitations of particular qualitative research methods. The issue of subjectivity will be more to the fore in answers that merit the top of the band, though the assessment will still be fairly basic.
- 19-25 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of qualitative research methods and offer an assessment of their usefulness with direct reference to the issue of subjectivity. The more focused the answer is on the issue of subjectivity, the higher in the band it is likely to come.

4 ‘Theoretical factors will always be the most important influence on a sociologist’s choice of research method’. Explain and assess this statement.

- 0-6 Answers that are confined to a few simple observations about research methods in general may fit the lower half of the band. If the answer includes one or two elementary points about the factors that may influence choice of research methods, a mark at the top of the band may be justified.
- 7-12 At this level several factors that may influence choice of research methods will be described, with reasonable accuracy and detail. Appropriate links may be made with particular research methods, especially at the upper end of the band. However, the answers will lack assessment and the response to the specific wording of the question will be somewhat indirect.
- 13-18 To reach this band, the candidate must discuss a good range of factors that may influence choice of research methods. Higher in the band, both practical and theoretical factors will be considered. There will be an attempt to assess the statement and this may be achieved by, for example, evaluating the relative importance of the different factors that may influence choice of research methods.
- 19-25 At this level, both parts of the question will be addressed in reasonable detail. A wide range of relevant factors will be considered and the assessment will be well informed and sustained, particularly at the upper end of the band. High- quality answers may take issue with the claim that choice of research methods is influenced by factors that vary from study to study, by arguing perhaps that factors such as theoretical perspective tend to have an ongoing influence on the methods that a sociologists favours. A strong analytical approach of this kind would merit the top of the band.

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Section C

5 “Everyone has an equal chance of achieving high social status and reward in modern societies.” Assess this claim.

- 0-6 Answers that are confined to a few simple observations about inequality or the class system may fit this band. If this includes some evidence of relevant sociological knowledge rather than just commonsense references, a mark at the top of the band may be justified.
- 7-12 There will be a relevant sociological context to answers at this level. At the most simple level this may be couched in terms of comparing the concepts of achieved and ascribed status. A more developed answer may discuss the influence of factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity in shaping life chances. At this level, however, the answers may be short of detail and/or fail to deal directly with the issues raised by the question.
- 13-18 Answers at this level may be based on an appropriate theoretical structure, and references to functionalism and the meritocracy thesis would be particularly relevant. Empirical evidence may also be used to develop the discussion, and in this respect references to the findings from social mobility studies could be used to very good effect. There will be some relevant assessment, though this will be very basic and especially so at the bottom of the band.
- 19-25 At this level the discussion will be sophisticated in terms of theory or the empirical evidence used, or both. There will be a concerted attempt to assess the claim that everyone has an equal chance of achieving high social status and reward in modern societies. Higher in the band the assessment will make clear the complexity of the issues raised by the question and develop conclusions that draw on a good range of relevant sociological knowledge and understanding.

6 “The concept of a “ruling class” is of little use in understanding the distribution of power in modern societies.” Assess this view.

- 0-6 Answers that are limited to a few simple points about the distribution of power will fit this band. If the answer also includes some semblance of relevant sociological understanding, it may justify the top of the band.
- 7-12 Answers at this level may be based on a basic descriptive account of the sociological thinking behind the concept of a ruling class. More developed references to Marxist theory are likely to feature towards the top of the band. There may be little or no attempt to discuss other theories of power at this level.
- 13-18 A reasonably detailed and accurate account of the Marxist theory of power, with some basic assessment, would merit a mark at this level. The assessment may be through juxtaposing the Marxist theory with one or more other theories of power. Alternatively, or additionally, there may be some use of appropriate empirical evidence, such as findings relating to the social background of the rich and powerful. The assessment will be very basic at the lower end of the band.
- 19-25 Appropriate sociological knowledge and understanding will be demonstrated in discussing the usefulness of the concept of a ruling class for analysing the distribution of power in modern societies. The assessment will be explicit and, at the top of the band, detailed and incisive. Different theories of power may be juxtaposed, but to merit a mark in this band there must be some attempt to draw conclusions about the respective strengths and/or limitations of each theory. Use of appropriate empirical evidence, in conjunction with sound theoretical knowledge, may be a feature of the highest quality answers.