

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced Level

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2015 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/22

Paper 2 (Theory and methods), maximum raw mark 50

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Section A

- 1 Interpretivists reject the idea that it is possible to investigate humans as objects of scientific study. However, they do try to conduct their research impartially and are reflexive about this, i.e. they are careful to review how objective they are as they proceed. Interpretivists choose from a wide range of qualitative methods to gather data. Sometimes these methods may be used together to form an ethnographic approach, where the aim of the researcher is to provide a thorough understanding of the culture of the group. Such an approach involves attempting to focus on the meanings people generate to make sense of their lives. To achieve this end, interpretivists often use a technique in their research known as *verstehen*.

Interpretivists have questioned whether it is possible to research people in a value-free way. Positivists, on the other hand, believe that it is possible for sociologists to study society without the research findings being influenced by value judgements.

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

- 1 One mark for a partial answer such as 'get to know the respondents well'.
- 2 Two marks for a clear and accurate definition. *Verstehen* involves researchers using a method that will enable them to understand a situation from the viewpoint of another individual or group. In doing so any data obtained is as *valid* as possible, i.e. an accurate and true picture of those being studied.

An example on its own will not be credited. If an example is used to support a definition, thereby demonstrating understanding of the term, this will be credited.

- (b) Describe two methods of research favoured by interpretivists. [4]

The following methods are acceptable:

- Varieties of observation, semi- and unstructured interviews, focus group.
- There may also be reference to ethnography, case studies, qualitative secondary data, and content analysis (semiology), all of which should also be credited.

One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 x 2 marks).

- (c) Explain why it might be impossible to study society in a value-free way. [8]

- Answers may consider a range of research methods, showing in each case how objectivity and freedom from bias/influence are difficult to achieve.
- There may be consideration of values in relation to choice of research topic, of method and data.
- It is not necessary to counter this view, i.e. by demonstrating that value-freedom is possible.

0–4 Lower in the band, a few simple points are likely to demonstrate a misunderstanding about what is meant by value-free or be in some other way marginal to the question.

Higher in the band, a basic account of why it might be difficult to study society objectively is likely to be given, without development or links to concepts or theoretical perspectives.

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5–8 Lower in the band, there is likely to be a sound account of the reasons why it might not be possible to study society in a value-free way.

Higher in the band, there will be clear and accurate links to theoretical perspectives and the interpretivist position in particular.

A good list of undeveloped points may gain up to six marks. To go higher, there needs to be development of three or more points.

N.B. This question asks candidates to ‘explain’, therefore there is no requirement for assessment.

(d) Assess the interpretivist view that it is inappropriate to use scientific methods for the study of human behaviour. [11]

0–4 Answers at this level are likely to show only limited appreciation of the issues raised by the question.

Lower in the band, a few simple points describing scientific methods might be worth 1 or 2 marks.

Higher in the band, there may be a limited attempt to describe the interpretivist perspective, with no direct links to the set question.

5–8 Answers at this level show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band, a simple account of the interpretivist appraisal of positivism, perhaps relying mainly on material in the stem, could gain 5 or 6 marks.

Higher in the band, a more detailed account that explores the view could gain 7 or 8 marks. A one-sided answer that is done very well could also gain up to 8 marks.

A descriptive answer cannot gain more than 8 marks.

9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate good sociological knowledge and understanding applied to the question. There will also be an assessment of the view on which the question is based.

Lower in the band (9–10 marks), there will be a good account of the interpretivist critique of positivism and the scientific method will be complemented by an assessment of the strengths and/or weaknesses of the interpretivist position.

At the top of the band, the assessment must either cover a good range of issues and/or demonstrate depth of understanding.

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Section B

- 2 'Longitudinal surveys provide a more complete understanding of society than can be achieved using other research methods.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

Level 1 0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common-sense observations.

Lower in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common-sense understanding. For example, there may be misunderstanding about the nature of longitudinal research, perhaps confusing it with observation techniques or the use of secondary sources.

Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common-sense understanding. For example, answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of the nature of longitudinal studies but offer very little detail or development that is relevant to the question as set.

Level 2 7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question.

Lower in the band (7–9 marks), the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies. Answers will be rather list-like and may focus on some practical pros and cons of longitudinal research.

Higher in the band (10–12 marks), answers may either cover a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or cover a wider range of points in limited detail. They will include some extension of key points, perhaps through references to actual longitudinal studies and/or links to relevant concepts or theoretical perspectives.

Level 3 13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Lower in the band (13–15 marks), answers may use a limited range of knowledge and concepts/theory. The points covered may lack development. The account of the strengths and limitations of longitudinal studies may cover both theoretical and practical issues, though not necessarily with equal emphasis.

Higher in the band (16–18 marks), answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant, and include some well-developed points.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level. Candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the analysis of the view that they yield the 'most complete' understanding of society may not be fully convincing.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

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Level 4 19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

Firstly, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

Secondly, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Thirdly, there must also be some evidence of assessment. At this level expect an accurate and detailed appraisal of the extent to which longitudinal studies provide the most complete understanding of society of all approaches.

Lower in the band (19–21 marks), the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated.

Higher in the band (22–25 marks), there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well directed towards the question. Answers may note that the value of longitudinal research may vary to some extent depending on the subject studied, the theoretical perspective adopted, and the relationship with any other methods that may be involved in the study.

There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.

3 Explain and assess the view that the functionalist approach to socialisation is too deterministic to fully explain how human behaviour is shaped. [25]

Level 1 0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be assertive and focus on a few common-sense observations.

Lower in the band, answers may be confined to one or two simple points based on assertion/common-sense understanding. For example, a few general statements about socialisation.

Higher in the band, there may be a wider range of simple points based on assertion/common-sense understanding. For example, there may be some attempt to define the functionalist approach to socialisation, albeit in a very simple and partial way.

Level 2 7–12 Answers at this level will show some sociological knowledge and understanding of the question. A solid descriptive account of the functionalist theory of socialisation would fit this band if fairly well done.

Lower in the band (7–9 marks), the answer may be confined to a narrow range of points, lacking detail and possibly with some inaccuracies.

Higher in the band (10–12 marks), answers may either cover a narrow range of points in reasonable detail or cover a wider range of points in limited detail. For example, an answer that is confined to discussing functionalism, but which also includes some acknowledgement of why the functionalist concept of socialisation might be seen as deterministic, would fit here.

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Level 3 13–18 Answers at this level will show good sociological knowledge and understanding. The material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

A good defence of functionalism/determinism could get into this level if it is well done.

Lower in the band (13–15 marks), answers may use only a limited range of knowledge and concepts/theory. The use of concepts/theory, and the points covered, may lack development. Here, the functionalist theory of socialisation will be described with reasonable accuracy.

Higher in the band (16–18 marks), answers will use a wider range of knowledge, supported by the use of concepts/theory where relevant, and include some well-developed points. For example, there may be a reasonably sound attempt to address the issue of determinism.

There is no requirement for assessment at this level.

Level 4 19–25 Answers at this level must achieve three things:

Firstly, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

Secondly, the material used will be interpreted accurately and applied effectively to answering the question.

Thirdly, there must also be some evidence of assessment. At this level expect an accurate and detailed account of the extent to which the functionalist view of socialisation is overly deterministic.

Lower in the band (19–21 marks), the assessment may be largely delivered through juxtaposition of contrasting arguments/theories. Alternatively, the assessment may be limited to just one or two evaluative points that are explicitly stated.

Higher in the band (22–25 marks), there will be sustained assessment and the points offered will be explicit and well directed towards the question. Responses will show a fuller picture of the contribution that alternative theories have made to understanding the process of socialisation. The interactionist perspective may be used to good effect to illustrate the limitations of the functionalist theory.

There is likely to be a well-formulated conclusion.