

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2014 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/21

Paper 2 (Theory and Methods), 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 May/June 2014 series for most IGCSE, GCE Advanced Level and Advanced Subsidiary Level components and some Ordinary Level components.

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Section A

Answer Question 1.

Many sociologists prefer to use a method that produces quantitative data. Examples of quantitative data include school examination results, how many people get married in a given year and the proportion of the population over 65 years of age. Postal questionnaires are a type of research method that produces quantitative data. With the use of this method, questions are sent to respondents along with a request for the completed questionnaire to be returned to the researcher. Usually most of the questions are closed or pre-coded and this will allow the researcher to measure whether or not there are *correlations*.

The construction and design of a questionnaire requires that the sociologist takes great care. One basic idea associated with questionnaires is that all respondents should be presented with the same questions in the same order; another key feature is that once the survey has begun, the questionnaire cannot be changed.

- 1 (a) What is meant by the term *correlations*? [2]
- (b) Describe **two** reasons why a sociologist might choose to use a **postal** questionnaire in sociological research. [4]
- (c) Explain the factors that a researcher should take into consideration when designing a questionnaire. [8]
- (d) Assess the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires in sociological research. [11]

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Section B

Answer **one** question from this section.

- 2** 'Whilst individuals operate within the constraints of the social structure, that structure may also be changed through their actions and choices.' Explain and assess this view. **[25]**

- 3** 'Feminist theory no longer has any relevance for understanding modern industrial societies.' Explain and assess this view. **[25]**

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1. (a) What is meant by the term *correlations*? [2]

A measurement of the strength of the relationship between two or more variables. Candidates may refer to the fact that a correlation does not in itself show a cause and effect relationship, it simply indicates the possibility of a causal relationship. However, this is not essential to defining the term. 2 marks for a clear and accurate definition. 1 mark for a partial definition such as ‘two variables that can be linked’.

(b) Describe two reasons why a sociologist might choose to use a postal questionnaire in sociological research. [4]

Reasons might include:

- cheap to conduct in terms of manpower and collation
- possible to survey a large sample
- efficient and swift analysis with pre-coded questions
- permits access to a geographically varied sample
- prevents the bias caused by the interviewer effect.

One mark for identifying a reason and one mark for development (2 × 2 marks).

(c) Explain the factors that a researcher should take into consideration when designing a questionnaire. [8]

Factors that might be taken into account when designing a questionnaire include: research aims, type of respondent, question structure and clarity, required response rate and means of achieving it, the attitudes and feelings of the sample group, ethical considerations such as anonymity and sensitivity issues, whether or not the questionnaire is administered by a researcher or delivered by post etc.

0–4 A basic account of a few factors, lacking sufficient relevance and insight, could merit 3 or 4 marks.

5–8 A range of factors will be discussed in a way that shows sociological insight and awareness of the complexity of the research process. Lower in the band the range may lack breadth or sufficient explanation, whereas responses that trigger the top of the band will include several factors some of which are fully explained.

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

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(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires in sociological research. [11]

0–4 A basic description of what questionnaires involve, with no further development, would be worth 2 or 3 marks. A few simple points about the practical benefits and/or drawbacks of questionnaires could reach the top of the band.

5–8 A basic account of a few strengths and/or limitations of questionnaires would merit 5 or 6 marks. This may take the form of a list. A fuller account of some strengths and limitations would reach the top part of the band. At this level, the analysis need go no further than simply stating advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires. Even in answers that reach the top of this band, links to theoretical perspectives and concepts (such as validity and reliability) may be quite limited.

9–11 The discussion will be more sophisticated at this level, perhaps including links to theoretical perspectives and/or the use of concepts such as validity. Higher in the band the assessment will be explicit and conclusions will emerge about the usefulness of questionnaires, rather than the answer being confined to simply listing advantages and disadvantages of the method. Answers may usefully refer to empirical studies although this is not essential to reach the highest band.

2. 'Whilst individuals operate within the constraints of the social structure, that structure may also be changed through their actions and choices.' Explain and assess this view. [25]

0–6 A few assertions about how society influences the individual might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A brief attempt to outline the concept of socialisation, with little or no further development, would merit 5 or 6 marks.

7–12 Answers that limit their discussion to a summary of, for example, feral children would be worth no more than 7 or 8 marks. Alternatively, a solid descriptive account of the concept of socialisation with few direct links to the wording of the question could gain up to 10 marks. To reach the top of the band there needs to be some attempt to explain the idea that society acts as an external force that constrains and shapes our behaviour. This is likely to be achieved through a discussion of positivism, perhaps with reference to Durkheim. At this level, there will be little or no attempt to develop and assess the notion of choice that is expressed in the wording of the question.

13–18 At this level, answers must provide a sustained account of what it means to claim that society is an external force that constrains and shapes our behaviour. This is most likely to be achieved through reference to the work of Durkheim or other functionalists, but other structural theories (Marxist, structuralist) could be used to explain the notion that society exists as an external force. Higher in the band there may also be an attempt to explore alternative views of the relationship between the individual and society. This will most likely be achieved through a discussion of interactionism. Contrasting functionalist and interactionist perspectives on socialisation would be one way of providing a degree of analysis.

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

First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

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

Third, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

At this level there will be a thorough exploration of the positivist view that society acts as a force and the countervailing perspective that social action plays a significant role. Lower in the band the assessment may lack depth and may possibly contain some over-generalisation. However, higher level responses need to reference those theories that offer a ‘middle way’ as suggested in the question, i.e. that the actions and choices individuals take can change social structures. The concept of structuration and reference to Giddens is likely to feature in high level responses. To reach the top of the band, there should be some element of sophistication, such as the ability to draw arguments together to reach an overall conclusion about the validity of a positivist/interpretivist dichotomy.

3. ‘Feminist theory no longer has any relevance for understanding modern industrial societies.’ Explain and assess this view. [25]

0–6 A few poorly-expressed points demonstrating a simple understanding of feminist theory would fit the upper half of the band. Lower in the band, there might be some general observations about inequality that are not linked to the question explicitly.

7–12 A basic account of a few features of feminist theory with no further development would fit the lower part of the band. A fuller descriptive account of feminist theory would trigger the higher part of the band. Any references to different strands of feminist theory are likely to be highly descriptive and limited in scope at this level. Assessment is not a requirement to fit this band.

13–18 A sound account of feminist theory will be provided and there will be a basic attempt to analyse its relevance for understanding modern industrial societies. The assessment may be developed in various ways including, for example, through a consideration of relevant empirical studies and/or references to contrasting theories such as those associated with Weber, functionalism, post-modernism or varieties of post-feminism. At the lower end, the analysis may be somewhat uneven, limited perhaps to general observations about the weaknesses of feminist theory. At the top end of the band, look for developments such as the consideration of different strands of feminist theory, with some attempt to consider the implications of improvements and changes in the social position of women for the continuing relevance of feminist theory.

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

First, there will be good sociological knowledge and understanding.

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

Third, there must also be some evidence of assessment.

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Answers at this level will demonstrate a very good understanding of feminist theory and will make a concerted and well-informed attempt to assess its relevance for understanding modern industrial societies. At the lower end of the band, the assessment may rely heavily on identifying general weaknesses and/or strengths with feminist theory. Higher in the band, answers may address specific issues, such as whether the feminist concept of patriarchy still has the same salience in a purportedly post-modern society, where the traditional structure of the family and the division of labour within the home is breaking down. Evidence of achievement by females in areas such as education and employment may also be used to question the relevance of feminist assumptions about gender inequality. Attempts within feminist theory to revise dated notions about the nature of gender inequality might also be described in high quality answers.