

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level and GCE Advanced Level

**MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2010 question paper  
for the guidance of teachers**

**9699 SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/21**

Paper 21 (Data Response), 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.

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- 1 The process by which individuals learn the *culture* of their society is known as socialisation. Primary socialisation takes place during childhood, usually within the family. Socialisation is not, however, confined to childhood. It is a lifelong process. Agencies of secondary socialisation include the education system, the media, and the workplace.

Socialisation is reinforced through sanctions and rewards that encourage the individual to behave in socially acceptable ways. There are different views, however, about the extent to which socialisation produces conformity in society. The functionalist perspective views socialisation as the process through which people internalise values and learn to follow the norms of society. But this view has been criticised for implying that society has more influence and control over the individual than may be the case.

Sociologists who favour the interpretive approach disagree with the view that socialisation is a one-way process in which individuals learn to fit into society. They argue that people are free to negotiate their social roles and obligations and choose alternative courses of action. Society is not an all-powerful force that determines how the individual will behave. Rather, for the interpretivists, the individual is a skilled social actor capable of influencing the social environment in which he or she operates.

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

Culture refers to the shared norms, values, language and knowledge of a society. A definition along these lines would gain two marks; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'culture means our values' or 'culture is a way of life'.

- (b) Describe two examples of sanctions that encourage people to follow the norms of society. [4]

Sanctions may be formal (police, law) or informal (ostracism, criticism, threats, withdrawal of privileges, etc.). One mark for each example identified and one mark for describing each example (2 × 2 marks). Accept references to rewards as examples of sanctions.

- (c) Explain how children learn the norms and values of society. [8]

0–4 A few general knowledge type points about child development might be worth 2 or 3 marks. A limited attempt to apply relevant sociological knowledge in answering the question will reach the top of the band.

5–8 Theorists who have attempted to explain how children come to learn the norms and values of society include, for example, Mead, Cooley, Bowlby, Piaget, Oakley. A basic account of one of these theories/explanations would merit the lower part of the band. A good account of one of these theories/explanations could reach the top of the band. Likewise, an account of two or more relevant theories/explanations would also merit the top of the band.

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**(d) Assess the functionalist theory of socialisation.****[11]**

0–4 A few simple points about socialisation unrelated to any particular theory or explanation might be worth 2 or 3 marks. A more coherent account of what socialisation means and/or a description of the main agencies through which socialisation occurs would trigger the top of the band.

5–8 A simple descriptive account of the functionalist theory of socialisation would fit the lower part of the band. A more detailed account could reach the top of the band. There is no requirement at this level to provide an assessment of the functionalist theory.

9–11 A sound account of the functionalist theory of socialisation allied to a description of one or more other theories of socialisation (Marxist, interactionist, feminist) would fit the bottom of this band. To go higher, the assessment of the functionalist theory needs to be explicit and well articulated.

- 2 Interviews can be of three main types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Although they are all types of interview, there are very significant differences between them. Structured interviews are similar to questionnaires in that they contain pre-set questions that are asked in the same order every time. Whereas a questionnaire may be given to a respondent to complete privately, a structured interview consists of a spoken question-and-answer session between interviewer and interviewee. The presence of the interviewer in this process involves benefits and limitations when compared to questionnaires. Structured interviews are one of the research methods that sociologists consider to be high in reliability.**

**A semi-structured interview is a mixture of structured and unstructured interviewing methods, where a number of questions may be pre-set, but the interviewer is free to ask additional questions in order to explore issues raised by earlier answers.**

**Unstructured interviews are more like conversations than the tightly structured interview schedules of the structured interview. The purpose of unstructured interviews is to gain an in-depth understanding of what an interviewee thinks and feels about particular subjects or issues. Usually, the interviewer will allow the conversation to develop freely around these subjects, and the interview session may last for several hours or even several sessions stretched out over a number of days or weeks. Unstructured interviews are designed to produce *qualitative data*, and as such are likely to be favoured by sociologists from an interpretivist perspective.**

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

Qualitative data refers to written sources that provide a detailed account of people's meanings and understandings. Two marks for an accurate definition along these lines; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'non-statistical data' or 'results from in-depth studies'.

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**(b) Describe one benefit and one limitation of structured interviews when compared to questionnaires. [4]**

Advantages include: interviewer can explain questions, provide reassurance and encouragement to the respondent, collect useful additional information by observing the behaviour of the respondent, and check that the person answering the questions is the intended respondent. Disadvantages include: respondent may be more willing to answer personal questions in a questionnaire; respondent has less time to reflect on his/her answers, and the possible interviewer effect.

One mark for identifying an advantage and one mark for identifying a disadvantage. One further mark for describing the advantage and one mark for describing the disadvantage. (2 × 2 marks)

**(c) Explain why sociologists from an interpretivist perspective are unlikely to use structured interviews. [8]**

0–4 A few simple points about interpretivism unrelated to structured interviews would be worth 2 or 3 marks. A sound account of the benefits and limitations of structured interviews, but with little or no reference to interpretivism, could reach the top of the band.

5–8 Answers at this level will focus directly on the reasons why interpretivists are unlikely to use structured interviews. Lower in the band the connections made may be somewhat basic and only a narrow range of points will be covered. To score higher, a clear and accurate account must be offered of the theoretical underpinnings to the interpretivist critique of structured interviews. Answers can reach the top of the band without needing to provide any assessment of the interpretivist position.

**(d) Assess the usefulness of unstructured interviews as a method of sociological research. [11]**

0–4 A basic description of what an unstructured interview involves, with no further development, would be worth 2 or 3 marks. An account of the benefits and/or drawbacks of interviews in general could reach the top of the band.

5–8 A basic (perhaps list-like) account of a few strengths and/or limitations of unstructured interviews would merit 5 or 6 marks. A fuller account of some strengths and limitations would reach the top part of the band. At this level, the assessment need go no further than simply stating advantages and disadvantages of unstructured interviews. 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 especially, the assessment will be explicit and conclusions will emerge about the usefulness of unstructured interviews rather than the answer being confined to simple listing of advantages and disadvantages of the method.

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- 3 The main sociological perspectives each view the nature, extent and causes of poverty differently. Functionalists believe that if poverty is a widespread feature of society, then it must be functional, although it is clearly dysfunctional to those in poverty. Functionalist sociologists have different views about what social functions are served by poverty.

Other theories of poverty focus on the norms and values of those in poverty, rather than the social functions that poverty may serve. After studying the lifestyles of the poor, Oscar Lewis concluded that a 'culture of poverty' exists that is passed on from generation to generation through the family and the community. This view draws attention to the negative aspects of the way the poor live, their defeatism and apparent lack of organisation.

A different type of explanation views poverty as part of the structure of inequality in society. This view emphasises the powerlessness of the poor, and their inability to help themselves or influence a society that is organised in a way that means some people will always be poor. Sociologists within the Marxist tradition have even claimed that poverty plays a key part in supporting the capitalist economic system, with the poor providing many benefits for the wealthy and powerful members of society.

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

Social consequences that are unhelpful for society, or for particular groups in society, may be described as dysfunctional. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition such as 'not working properly' or 'an unintended consequence in society'.

- (b) Describe two social functions that may be served by the existence of poverty. [4]

Poverty may help to ensure that dirty, dangerous and menial jobs get done; the poor may help to uphold the legitimacy of dominant norms by providing examples of deviance; the poor help to guarantee the status of the non-poor; the poor add to the social viability of various charities and other philanthropic activities; the poor create career opportunities for those engaged in social work activities. One mark for the example plus one mark for a brief description of the function served.

- (c) Explain how the existence of poverty might benefit the wealthy and powerful members of society. [8]

0–4 A few disjointed points about the nature of poverty, with little or no reference to the relationship between the poor and the wealthy, might be worth 1 or 2 marks. A few simple points about how the wealthy benefit from the existence of poverty, with little development and perhaps based mainly on assertion, would trigger the top part of the band.

5–8 A sound explanation of how the existence of the poor might serve the interests of the rich and powerful, perhaps lacking references to appropriate concepts and theories, might merit the lower part of the band if done well. To score higher, the answer must include direct references, or strongly implied references, to relevant sociological material i.e. concepts, theories, evidence, studies.

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**(d) Assess the 'culture of poverty' thesis.**

**[11]**

- 0–4 A few general points about poverty without clear references to Lewis' work could achieve up to 4 marks. Likewise, a limited, and perhaps partly inaccurate, attempt to define the 'culture of poverty' thesis would trigger the top of the band.
- 5–8 A sound descriptive account of Lewis' theory would fit the lower part of the band. To score higher, there needs to be some attempt at assessment. Within this band, the assessment may take the form of juxtaposition i.e. where other explanations of poverty are considered alongside Lewis's theory.
- 9–11 At this level, a good account of the 'culture of poverty' thesis will be complemented by discussion of how it differs from other explanations of poverty and/or by an analysis of its strengths/limitations. Higher in the band, the assessment may rely less on juxtaposition and the evaluation will be thoughtful and well informed. Answers that demonstrate a good understanding of the significance of the differences between cultural and structural explanations of poverty are likely to trigger the top of the band.