

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2007 question paper

2251 SOCIOLOGY

2251/01

Paper 1, maximum raw mark 90

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.

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 discussions or correspondence in connection with these mark schemes.

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Section A: Research Methods

1 Participant observation is a research strategy that aims to gain a close and detailed understanding of a particular area of study, usually a small group, through the researcher becoming involved with the people in their natural environment. This research may be covert or overt. Covert participant observation is regarded as less ethically acceptable than overt observation. It is also more dangerous.

With both types of participant observation there is risk that the researcher may come to identify too closely with the group they are studying and stop viewing their behaviour objectively. This research approach is likely to produce qualitative rather than quantitative data. That makes it difficult to compare one piece of research with another. The researcher may also experience difficulties in recording accurately what they observe when studying the group.

(a) In sociological research, what is meant by the following terms:

- (i) natural environment [2]
- (ii) objectivity [2]
- (iii) qualitative data [2]

For these questions, two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a flawed attempt that contains some understanding of what the term means.

- (i) *The social context or setting that members of the group normally occupy = 2 marks.*
- (ii) *A view of reality that is free from bias and distortion = 2 marks.*
- (iii) *Research evidence that provides an in depth account in words of the feelings and thoughts of the respondent = 2 marks.*

(b) Distinguish between *overt* and *covert* participant observation. [4]

Up to two marks for a clear and accurate definition of each term [2 x 2 marks]. One mark only in total if the two terms are confused, but otherwise accurately defined.

(c) Describe **two** reasons why a researcher carrying out overt participant observation may find it difficult to be accepted by the people being studied. [4]

Potential problems of getting close to a group using overt participant observation include: the group may mistrust the real purposes of the research; the observer may not blend in well with the group; the group may have things to hide; not all members of the group want to be studied.

0-2 An accurate understanding of one reason, or a limited understanding of two reasons.

3-4 The candidate demonstrates an accurate understanding of two reasons.

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- (d) Describe **two** reasons why covert participant observation may be regarded as less acceptable than overt participant observation.

Reasons include: deception in gaining entry to the group; difficulty in exiting the group without disclosing identity and providing any support needed in coping with the researcher's withdrawal from the group; issues of whether the researcher should be involved in dubious activities in order to maintain identity within the group when studying, for example, criminal gangs.

0-2 An accurate understanding of one reason, or a limited understanding of two reasons.

3-4 The candidate demonstrates an accurate understanding of two reasons.

- (e) Describe **two** reasons why the participant observer may find it difficult to record their observations accurately when studying the group. [4]

Reasons include: having to rely on memory and record information later if using covert participant observation; the unfolding nature of group interaction may make it difficult to break off and take notes at convenient points; the group may be opposed to being filmed or tape recorded by the researcher; the researcher may miss some key events or aspects of group interaction because it is difficult to focus on all of the group members at the same time.

0-2 An accurate understanding of one reason, or a limited understanding of two reasons.

3-4 The candidate demonstrates an accurate understanding of two reasons.

- (f) Describe **two** strengths and **two** limitations of quantitative data in sociological research. [8]

Strengths include: a cheap form of data that is relatively quick to obtain in most cases; the data is easy to process using computers and relatively easy to analyse; it provides evidence about trends, correlations and comparisons; it is derived from research methods that are high in reliability. Limitations include: provides only a superficial record of people's thoughts and feelings; low in validity; statistics can be misleading, depending on how the evidence on which they are based is collected, collated and calculated; the evidence on which quantitative data is based is socially constructed, as critics of Durkheim's use of official suicide statistics note.

Essentially, up to two marks for each strength or limitation that is accurately described, so 4 x 2 marks.

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Section B: Culture and Socialisation

2 Sociologists claim that the way people behave in society is mainly the result of socialisation.

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

Socialisation is the process through which a person learns the generally accepted standards of behaviour, beliefs, conduct and morals of a society. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Distinguish between primary **and** secondary socialisation. [4]

Up to two marks for defining each of the terms [2 x 2]. Award one mark for a partial definition of each term.

(c) Explain how young children learn to interact effectively with other people. [6]

0-3 A few vague references to the importance of socialisation within the family and education may be sufficient to merit 2 or 3 marks.

4-6 Lower in the band the answer may consist of a sound account of the role of different agencies in the socialisation process. To reach the top of the band, the answer needs to demonstrate some understanding of the interactionist perspective on how children learn social norms, perhaps through reference to the ideas of Mead and/or Cooley.

(d) How far are sociologists correct in claiming that the way people behave in society is mainly the result of socialisation? [8]

0-4 Answers at this level may be confined to a few basic observations about the importance of socialisation, perhaps through a summary of the functionalist perspective on the subject.

5-8 Lower in the band the answer may be largely descriptive and cover material that implicitly demonstrates the importance of socialisation e.g. the cases of feral children, Durkheim's study of suicide, cross-cultural contrasts in behaviour patterns, etc. Higher in the band the assessment will be explicit and sustained.

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3 What it means to be a child has varied across different historical periods. There are also differences in conceptions of childhood.

(a) What is meant by the term *cultural differences*?

The term cultural differences may be defined as variations in the meaning and significance that different societies or groups attach to a particular social phenomenon. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Describe **two** examples that show how children were treated differently in earlier historical periods from the way they are treated today. [4]

Many examples are possible and each one cited by the candidates should be judged on merit. One mark for a relevant example and one mark for a clear and accurate description of the example [2 x 2].

(c) In what ways does the treatment of elderly people differ between modern industrial societies and traditional societies? [6]

0-3 At this level the answer may be restricted to a few vague observations about how the elderly receive more respect and support from family members in traditional societies.

4-6 A wider range of relevant points will be covered at this level. At the top of the band the response will be detailed and well informed.

(d) To what extent are children protected from the realities of the adult world in modern industrial societies? [8]

0-4 A few isolated comments about the nature of childhood in modern societies may be worth 2 or 3 marks. To go higher within the band, there must be some attempt to show how children today are, to some extent, protected from the realities of the adult world.

5-8 Lower in the band the answers may be largely descriptive and focused on showing how children are protected from adult realities today through, for example, legislative protection, emotionally close relations with parents, full time schooling, etc. Higher in the band this type of account will be supplemented by an explicit and plausible assessment of the issues raised by the question. For example, it may be pointed out that for some groups of children (the poor and/or the abused) exposure to harsh adult realities is still very much the norm.

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Section C: Social Stratification

4 Women on the whole earn less than men and are more likely to be employed on a part-time or temporary basis. Women are also less likely than men to achieve upward social mobility.

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

Social mobility is the movement of individuals or groups up or down the social hierarchy. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Describe **two** reasons why women usually earn less than men. [4]

Reasons include, for example, women may have more career breaks, the dual labour market theory, the reserve army of labour explanation, hostile or unhelpful attitudes of male-dominated trade unions, patriarchy and the prejudice of male bosses, and lower career and employment expectations among women. One mark for a relevant example and one mark for a clear and accurate description of the example [2 x 2].

(c) Explain why women are less likely than men to achieve upward social mobility. [6]

0-3 Answers at this level may rely on a few loosely relevant assertions about the problems women face in achieving upward social mobility. Lack of range and detail will be a characteristic of answers in this band.

4-6 A sound account of a range of relevant points that help to explain why women are less likely than men to achieve upward social mobility would merit a mark at the lower end of the band. To merit full marks, the answer should cover both factors related to the labour market and the disadvantages women may face as a consequence of their role within the family.

(d) To what extent can laws against sex discrimination overcome sexual inequality in the workplace? [8]

0-4 Answers that fit the lower part of the band will contain little or no reference to sex discrimination legislation. Higher in the band the candidate will offer a few basic reflections on the impact of sex discrimination laws in combating sexual inequality.

5-8 A competent descriptive account of the impact of sex discrimination laws in combating sexual inequality would merit a mark in the lower part of the band. To reach the top of the band, the descriptive content must be complemented by an assessment of the extent to which sexual inequality can be overcome through legal changes.

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5 Functionalists argue that in modern industrial societies people are rewarded on the basis of achievement rather than ascription.

(a) What is meant by the term *ascription*?

Ascription refers to the allocation of rewards and status on the basis of inherited characteristics. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Describe **two** examples of how a person may be rewarded for hard work in a modern industrial society. [4]

Examples include educational qualifications, job promotion, pay rises, higher status, government awards, etc. One mark for a relevant example and one mark for a clear and accurate description of the example [2 x 2].

(c) Explain why some occupations, such as doctors and engineers, are more highly rewarded than other occupations in modern industrial societies. [6]

0-3 A few commonsense points about why some people are paid more than others, with little detail or overall coherence, may merit 1 or 2 marks. A simple sociological explanation with a rather narrow focus would be worth 3 marks.

4-6 A basic account of one theory or explanation for why some occupations are more highly rewarded than others would merit the lower part of the band. Awareness that there are different explanations (functionalist versus Marxist, for instance) would nudge the mark up to the top of the band.

(d) To what extent is it true that people are rewarded on the basis of achievement rather than ascription in modern industrial societies? [8]

0-4 Answers at this level are likely to be confined to a few general remarks about the relationship between achievement and reward in modern industrial societies. There will be little or no discernible sociological backing to the points offered at this level.

5-8 A good descriptive account of the purported basis on which people are rewarded would be worth 5 or 6 marks. This might include, for example, an answer that focuses largely on describing the functionalist theory of how rewards are distributed. A better answer would recognise that it is a matter of debate whether achievement is the sole or main basis on which people are rewarded in modern industrial societies. Some of the relevant issues will be developed in answers that merit the top of the band.

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Section D: Power and Authority

6 Political parties and pressure groups make a significant contribution to the decision-making process in modern democracies.

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

A pressure group is a body of people who aim to protect and/or promote a set of interests or cause by seeking to influence government decision-making. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Describe **two** functions of political parties. [4]

Functions include representation, recruitment of leaders, policy making, and political education for members. One mark for a relevant example and one mark for a clear and accurate description of the example [2 x 2].

(c) Explain how the decision making process in modern democracies differs from that in authoritarian regimes. [6]

0-3 A few simple points about the nature of democracy in isolation would be worth 2 or 3 marks.

4-6 A sound account of how decisions are made in democratic systems with little or no attempt to draw contrasts with authoritarian regimes would be worth 4 marks. To go higher, the contrasts with authoritarianism need to be clearly stated.

(d) To what extent can ordinary members of the public influence the decision-making process in modern democracies? [8]

0-4 A few assertions about how democratic modern societies are would be worth 2 or 3 marks. A slightly better answer at this level would qualify the answer in some way, perhaps by noting that some people have more power and influence than others, though such points will go largely undeveloped.

5-8 A sound descriptive account of how the public may influence the decision making process in modern democracies would be worth 5 or 6 marks. To go higher, there must be some relevant analysis and assessment. This may take the form of a contrast between different theories of power (liberal, pluralist, elite) or possibly an evaluation of the role of political parties and pressure groups as vehicles for representing the public.

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7 Through means such as news reporting and opinion polls, the mass media have a lot of influence on voting behaviour in modern industrial societies.

(a) What is meant by the term *opinion polls*?

Opinion polls are a device used mainly by the media to measure the voting intentions of the public in the period running up to a major election. A clear definition along these lines = 2 marks; an incomplete definition showing some understanding = 1 mark.

(b) Describe **two** influences on voting behaviour apart from the mass media. [4]

Influences on voting behaviour include: social class, religion, gender, age, community, ethnicity, etc. One mark for a relevant example and one mark for a clear and accurate description of the example [2 x 2].

(c) Explain why news reporting may influence the way people vote. [6]

0-3 A few vague points about news reporting with little or no link to voting behaviour may be worth 1 or 2 marks. A simple, rather narrow account of how news reporting may influence the way people vote would merit 3 marks.

4-6 A sound explanation that may nevertheless be rather narrow in the range of points made would be worth 4 marks. To go higher, the answer needs to be more developed and this is most likely to be achieved by noting a range of ways in which news reporting may influence political opinion.

(d) To what extent does social class remain a major influence on voting behaviour in modern industrial societies? [8]

0-4 A simple response to the question based mainly on assertion rather than reasoned sociological understanding would be worth 2 or 3 marks. A sociological account of the factors that influence voting behaviour, with only loose or indirect links to the question as set may merit 4 marks.

5-8 At the bottom of the band there should be factors other than social class discussed. To go higher, assessment of the idea of the importance of social class should be advanced, possibly a sound descriptive account of the class de-alignment argument would justify a mark of 7 or 8.