

**MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2009 question paper  
for the guidance of teachers**

**9699 SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/01**

Paper 1 (Essay), 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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### Section A

**1 “Society acts as an external force that constrains and shapes our behaviour.” Explain and assess this claim.**

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 are confined to a summary of the cases of so-called feral children would be worth no more than 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 might be achieved through a discussion of positivism and Durkheim’s work in particular. At this level there will be little or no attempt to assess the notion of determinism expressed in the wording of the question.

13–18 To trigger this band 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, through juxtaposition, an element of assessment. A more philosophical critique of determinism (for example, through reference to the ideas of Dennis Wrong) would be another way of assessing the view expressed in the question. The assessment at this level may lack depth and possibly contain some over-generalisation.

19–25 At this level there will be a thorough exploration of the positivist view that society acts as an external force. Higher in the band this might include reflections on different strands of determinism in sociological theory e.g. Durkheimian and Parsonian functionalism, Marxist historical materialism, and structuralism. The explanatory content of the answer will be complemented by a detailed assessment of the idea that society in some way determines the behaviour of the individual. Although some of the assessment may be in the form of juxtaposing different sociological perspectives, there must also be some direct engagement with the issues raised by the positivist view of society acting as an external force. To reach the top of the band, look too for some element of sophistication, such as the ability to draw arguments together to reach an overall conclusion about the validity of a deterministic view of the relationship between individual and society.

**2 “Sociological research can and should be based on the methods that are used in the natural sciences.” Explain and assess this view.**

0–6 A few fragmented comments about sociological research methods and/or science might merit 3 or 4 marks. Some awareness of the nature of scientific method with little or no linkage to sociology would trigger the top of the band.

7–12 Lower in the band there may be a simple attempt to describe scientific method and its links to sociology through the influence of positivism. However, the answer at this level is likely to lack much in terms of clarity and detail. Higher in the band, the positivist perspective will be described in more detail and with greater accuracy. At this level there will be little or no attempt to assess the notion that sociology can or should be based on

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the methods used in the natural sciences. Answers that become sidetracked by very much focusing on different concepts of science, without linking that material well to the question, could reach the top of this band but no higher.

- 13–18 A concerted attempt will be made at this level to show why the methods used in the natural sciences might be appropriate as a foundation for sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment of positivism may lack detail and might be confined, for example, to a few simple observations about interpretivism. Higher in the band, the assessment will form a more balanced part of the answer, though it may still be limited mainly to an account of the interpretivist critique of positivism.
- 19–25 Candidates at this level will demonstrate a clear and accurate understanding of the positivist perspective and the possible links between science and sociological investigation. Different models of science may be discussed in ways that are directly relevant to the question. For example, the notions of scientific rigour and objectivity may be challenged through reference to the ideas of Kuhn, Popper, Lynch, and the Realists, etc. The anti-positivist position will be explored in some detail and the assessment may be extended by distinguishing between whether sociological research *can* be scientific and whether sociologists *should* seek to emulate the natural sciences. To reach the top of the band, the assessment requires some element of sophistication, such as the candidate making good use of the post-modernist critique of science or perceptive use of the realist perspective to argue that sociology can be seen as a science in a 'weak' or modified sense.

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### Section B

**3 “No matter what research methods are used, all sociological studies will be affected by the values of the researcher.” Explain and assess this claim.**

0–6 A few isolated remarks about research methods with no reference to values or bias might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A very brief and elementary discussion of the way that values might influence sociological research would trigger the top of the band.

7–12 A general account of the strengths and limitations of different research methods, with little or no explicit discussion of values, would fit the lower part of the band. To go higher, there needs to be some attempt to explain how the values of the researcher might influence the choice of research topic and/or the processes of sociological enquiry. However, at this level there will be little or no attempt to assess the claim that all sociological studies are affected by the values of the researcher.

13–18 A minimum requirement for accessing this band is that candidates identify different ways in which the values of the researcher might influence the research process. One way of satisfying this requirement would be to consider a range of research methods showing in the case of each method how objectivity and freedom from researcher bias/influence is difficult to achieve. Lower in the band the answers are likely to be mainly descriptive and assessment may be confined to a few simple points about sociologists who have claimed that sociological research can be value-free. Higher in the band, there will be a more concerted attempt to grapple with the notion that all sociological studies are affected by the values of the researcher. However, the assessment may lack depth and greatly rely on a statement of different theoretical positions on the relationship between values and sociological research.

19–25 The ways in which the values of the researcher might influence the process of sociological enquiry will be well illustrated at this level. Different research methods will be discussed and conclusions will be reached about how far the selection and/or implementation of each method is subject to influence by the values of the researcher. The assessment will be sustained and demonstrate a sound understanding of the different theoretical positions on the role of values in sociology. Higher in the band, a clear and plausible conclusion will emerge about whether it is inevitable that sociological studies are affected by the values of the researcher.

**4 “Studies based on participant observation are too subjective to be of use in sociological research.” Explain and assess this claim.**

0–6 A simple attempt to define participant observation with no further development might be worth 3 or 4 marks. A few general remarks about strengths and/or limitations of participant observation, but with no reference to the issue of subjectivity, could gain 5 or 6 marks.

7–12 A basic account of the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation, with little or no attempt to discuss the issue of subjectivity, would fit the lower part of the band. A general discussion of participant observation that also happens to address the issue of subjectivity directly, albeit in a limited form, would trigger the top of the band. Alternatively, a descriptive response that is confined to explaining why participant observation might be considered too subjective to be of use in sociological research, could also reach the top of the band if well done. At this level, there need be no attempt to assess the claim on which the question is based.

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13–18 A requirement to reach this band is that answers demonstrate a sound understanding of why subjectivity might be an issue in relation to participant observation studies. There must also be an attempt to assess the claim that participant observation studies are too subjective to be of use in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may be elementary and possibly confined to a general cataloguing of the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation. The use of examples from research studies is not essential, though references to studies might help to illustrate key points and thereby strengthen the quality of the answer. Higher in the band, the assessment will be explicit and we might expect the candidate to form some basic judgement about how much of a problem subjectivity is in relation to participant observation studies.

19–25 Answers at this level will demonstrate a clear understanding of why subjectivity might be considered a problem in relation to participant observation studies. It is also likely that candidates will recognise that, from a different perspective, subjectivity may be regarded as a positive feature of participant observation and an integral part of what makes the method so useful in sociological research. Indeed, one way of demonstrating the sophistication required to reach the top of the band would be to unpick the notion of 'subjectivity' by, for example, showing that it may be understood in different ways. Similarly, another good line of analysis to pursue would be to question whether complete objectivity is possible in sociology, whatever methods of research are used. The assessment of whether participant observation is a useful research method will be explicit and sustained at this level. At the top of the band, the analysis will focus sharply on the issue of subjectivity and the extent to which it influences, positively or negatively, the outcome of research based on participant observation.

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### Section C

**5 “Marx’s theory of class is no longer relevant for understanding social stratification in modern industrial societies.” Explain and assess this view.**

- 0–6 A few disjointed remarks about class relations today might be worth 3 or 4 marks. Some cursory attempt to explain Marx’s theory of class, perhaps with some inaccuracy and omissions, would trigger the top of the band.
- 7–12 A basic account of Marx’s theory of class, with no further development, would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, we might expect that a discussion of Marx’s ideas will be complemented by a simple attempt to identify some of the changes that have affected the social structure of industrial societies since the nineteenth century. Alternatively, there may be little or no discussion of Marx’s ideas directly, but instead the answer might include a more sustained descriptive account of the nature of social divisions in contemporary society. An answer of that type, if well done, could reach the top of the band. At this level, there may be little or no attempt to assess the relevance of Marx’s theory of class.
- 13–18 Whether implicitly or explicitly, candidates at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of Marx’s theory of class. They will also explain with examples why Marx’s theory might be considered no longer relevant for understanding social stratification in modern industrial societies. The examples offered might include, for instance, references to changes in class boundaries, changes in the distribution of income and wealth, the creation of state welfare provision, the emergence of consumerism, the supposed fragmentation of the working class, the increasing salience of sexual and ethnic divisions, etc. There will be an attempt to assess Marx’s theory of class in terms of its contemporary relevance, but lower in the band the analysis may lack detail and could be confined to juxtaposing Marx’s ideas with those of later thinkers who have written about social stratification e.g. Weber, Dahrendorf, Parkin, Giddens, revisionist Marxists, and post-modernists. Higher in the band, the assessment will be explicit and more incisive, though still lacking in sophistication.
- 19–25 A very clear and accurate understanding of Marx’s theory of class will be evident in answers at this level. More particularly, candidates will also show a strong awareness of the senses in which the dimensions of social stratification have changed since Marx’s time. This will lead to a sustained assessment of the extent to which Marx’s ideas remain relevant today. To reach the top of the band, some element of sophistication in the analysis needs to be demonstrated. This might be achieved in various ways including, for example, by discussing the contribution of more recent Marxist thinkers and the extent to which their ideas help rescue Marx’s original theory of class. Good use of post-modernist ideas to engage critically with Marxist theory would be another way of demonstrating the qualities required in a top mark answer to this question.

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**6 “The key to explaining sexual inequality is the concept of patriarchy.” Explain and assess this claim.**

- 0–6 Answers at this level are unlikely to show any understanding of the concept of patriarchy. A few isolated remarks about sexual inequality could be worth 3 or 4 marks. Some cursory attempt to explain sexual inequality in sociological terms, but without referring to patriarchy, might trigger the top of the band.
- 7–12 An answer that is confined simply to describing some of the dimensions and characteristics of sexual inequality might be worth 7 or 8 marks. A basic descriptive account of different explanations of sexual inequality that fails to refer directly to patriarchy would fit the top of the band. At this level, answers need contain no assessment of the various explanations of sexual inequality.
- 13–18 Answers at this level will demonstrate at least a basic understanding of the concept of patriarchy and its use in explaining sexual inequality. Lower in the band the answers will be mainly descriptive. One approach would be to identify examples where the concept of patriarchy appears to help in explaining sexual inequality. This approach may be aided by referring to the work of feminists who have drawn heavily on the notion of patriarchy in their theories and studies of gender divisions. Another approach would be to discuss the concept of patriarchy alongside other explanations of sexual inequality. Lower in the band there will be some elementary assessment of the usefulness of the concept of patriarchy in explaining sexual inequality. Higher in the band the assessment will form a more balanced part of the answer, though it may still lack depth and some subtlety.
- 19–25 Answers at this level will demonstrate a clear and accurate understanding of the concept of patriarchy and the way that the concept has been used to explain gender divisions by writers in certain feminist traditions. It is likely that candidates will also show awareness of other strands of feminist theory together with attempts to explain sexual inequality that derive from other sociological perspectives e.g. Marxist, functionalist, post-modernist, etc. There will be an explicit and sustained assessment of the usefulness of the concept of patriarchy. Higher in the band, the analysis will contain some element of sophistication. This might be achieved by, for example, questioning whether a single, over-arching explanation of sexual inequality is appropriate, or by a well-honed dissection of the limitations of the concept of patriarchy as an explanation for sexual inequality.