

**MARK SCHEME for the October/November 2010 question paper  
for the guidance of teachers**

**9699 SOCIOLOGY**

**9699/12**

Paper 12 (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.

Mark schemes must be read in conjunction with the question papers and the report on the examination.

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**1 "Sociology can and should be based on the same principles and research methods as the natural sciences." Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- 0–6 A basic attempt to define what is meant by scientific method, with no further development, would be worth three or four marks. A few limited points broadly demonstrating an understanding of the positivist position would fit the upper part of the band. There will be no attempt to address the analytical issues raised by the question at this level and any relevant descriptive points will lack development.
- 7–12 Lower in the band, answers will demonstrate a basic understanding of the methods of the natural sciences and the position advanced by the positivists in the debate about sociological method. Higher in the band, there may be some attempt to contrast the positivist position with the interpretivist perspective, though this will be at a rather elementary level. Answers that focus on a critique of the methods used in natural science, without relating the discussion to sociological enquiry specifically, are unlikely to merit more than 12 marks.
- 13–18 Answers at this level will demonstrate a sound understanding of both the positivist and anti-positivist positions. Lower in the band, the response will still be largely descriptive and few, if any, clear conclusions will emerge. Higher in the band, the assessment will, to some extent, be explicit and basic arguments for and/or against the proposition on which the question is based will be advanced.
- 19–25 The answer will be based on a good understanding of the positivist and anti-positivist positions, and the assessment will be explicit and well developed. Lower in the band, the range of analytical points may be confined to the conventional positivist versus interpretivist debate. Higher in the band, a wider range of points may feature, including possibly references to one or more of the following: the post-modernist perspective, the feminist critique of positivism, and debates about the role of values in sociology. The distinction between 'can' and 'should' in relation to the question will be considered, albeit briefly, in answers that merit the upper part of the band.

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**2 "The concept of childhood is socially constructed." Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- 0–6 Answers at this level are likely to be characterised by misunderstanding of what the idea of a social construct implies in relation to childhood. General observations about childhood and infant socialisation may be proffered, much of which will have little relevance to the question. Beware too of references to youth culture, which may also have little bearing on the question. At the top of the band, answers may convey a vague understanding that definitions of childhood can vary historically and culturally, though there will be little or no development of this idea through references to appropriate sociological material.
- 7–12 At this level, the idea that childhood is a social construct will be explained, albeit in a faltering way at the lower end of the band. This may be achieved through reference to the work of historian Philip Aries, and/or other accounts of historical and cross-cultural variations in the experience of childhood. The idea that childhood is a social construct may be accepted largely uncritically at this level.
- 13–18 As for the previous band, though now candidates will also offer a basic assessment of the idea that childhood is a social construct. The assessment may be in terms of a critical review of the sources of evidence used to demonstrate historical variations in concepts of childhood. Likewise, it may involve a reasoned attack on the idea that 'childhood' is a specifically modern construct. Equally, candidates may note the considerable variations in experiences of childhood, depending on factors such as class, ethnicity and gender. A post-modernist viewpoint would draw attention to the shift from a concern with protecting children from the harsh realities of the sphere of production in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to concerns about the construction of childhood as a consumer experience (e.g. debates about how far children should be protected from commercial interests that seek to influence their needs and wants). Only a few of these issues will be touched on at this level and the analysis will be rudimentary, particularly lower in the band.
- 19–25 The idea that childhood is a social construct will be explained clearly and accurately, possibly with the use of supporting examples and/or references to relevant studies. The idea will be assessed at some length and the points made will be incisive, particularly at the top of the band. There may also be an attempt to reach a reasoned and balanced conclusion that takes account of arguments both for and against the proposition. Reward candidates who note that childhood roles may be negotiated differently within particular families and between different social actors.

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**3 Assess the usefulness of longitudinal surveys in sociological research. [25]**

- 0–6 At the lower end of the band, there may be misunderstanding about the nature of longitudinal research, perhaps confusing it with participant observation or the use of historical documents. Higher in the band, 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.
- 7–12 Answers at this level are likely to be confined to a basic account of the strengths and limitations of longitudinal surveys. There may be little or no assessment of the overall usefulness of longitudinal surveys. Lower in the band, answers will be rather list-like and may focus on some practical pros and cons of longitudinal research. Answers at the top of the band will include some extension of key points, perhaps through references to actual longitudinal studies and/or links to relevant theoretical perspectives.
- 13–18 There will be a clear and well-informed account of the strengths and limitations of longitudinal studies that covers both theoretical and practical issues, though not necessarily with equal emphasis. At the top of the band, candidates will begin to address the specific wording of the question, though the assessment of the usefulness of longitudinal surveys may be somewhat truncated and elementary.
- 19–25 At this level, candidates will provide a thorough review of the strengths and limitations of longitudinal surveys. There will also be an explicit assessment of the usefulness of longitudinal surveys in sociological research. Answers at the top of the band are likely to show some subtlety in the conclusions reached, perhaps by noting 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.

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**4 "Official statistics have only limited usefulness in sociological research." Explain and assess this claim. [25]**

- 0–6 A few disparate points about official statistics is what we might expect at this level. There will be no assessment as such, and any links to the usefulness of official statistics in sociological research are likely to be rudimentary at best.
- 7–12 At this level, the response is likely to be descriptive, possibly focused on an account of Durkheim's use of official statistics in his study of suicide. A few advantages and limitations will be covered in passing, but there will be little or nothing in the way of assessment. Higher in the band, a wider range of relevant points will be offered and/or better use made of examples to illustrate the different uses of official statistics in sociological research.
- 13–18 A range of advantages and limitations will be identified, though not necessarily with equal treatment. Lower in the band, the assessment may lack theoretical sophistication and perhaps focus mainly on practical advantages and limitations. Higher in the band, there will be some theoretical input through, for example, discussing concepts such as reliability and validity and/or by linking the question to the wider debates between positivists and interpretivists.
- 19–25 Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the advantages and limitations of using official statistics in sociological research. A range of practical and theoretical points will be covered, possibly supported by well-chosen references to relevant studies. Lower in the band, the assessment may lack some sharpness and detail, and these deficiencies will be less evident higher in the band. Highly-rewarded answers should also feature balanced, well-reasoned conclusions about the overall merit or otherwise of using official statistics in sociological research.

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**5 "Property ownership is no longer the main source of economic and political power in modern industrial societies." Explain and assess this view. [25]**

- 0–6 A few disjointed points about where power lies in modern societies may be all we can expect at this level. A very limited account of the Marxist theory of class with no further development may justify 5 or 6 marks.
- 7–12 Answers will demonstrate some awareness of the sociological theory that underpins the idea that property ownership is a key source of power, and higher in the band there will also be some recognition that there may be other sources of power and/or that property ownership may be less important than it was in the past. The response will be confined primarily to explaining the statement in the stem, and there will be little or no attempt at assessment.
- 13–18 It is likely that at this level answers will identify an appropriate theoretical framework for addressing the question. This might take the form of a critique of traditional Marxist theory, or it may focus more specifically on the managerial revolution thesis advanced in different ways by Bell, Burnham, Dahrendorf, etc. Of course, there may be other equally appropriate approaches. Lower in the band, the response will still be largely descriptive, though there will be some attempt at assessment. Higher in the band, the assessment will be more developed, though possibly lacking some sharpness and sophistication.
- 19–25 Answers will demonstrate a good understanding of the issues raised by the question and there will be a sustained and well-informed assessment. Theoretical and/or empirical material may be used to explore the issues, though a good mix of the two may be one feature to look for in answers that justify marks at the top of the band. Assessment that relies over-much on material from the 1950s and 1960s, e.g. the managerial revolution thesis, would have to be very well done to trigger this band and even then should be restricted to the bottom of the band. Higher in the band, there will be some use of more contemporary material, including possibly the contributions of post-modernist writers. While it is not essential to distinguish between economic and political power in answering the question, candidates who make good use of this distinction should be highly rewarded and it may be a feature to look for in answers at the top of the band.

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**6 "Racism is the reason why many ethnic minority groups are trapped in poverty." Explain and assess this claim.**

- 0–6 At this level, answers may be confined to a few observations about the forms of inequality experienced by many ethnic minority groups. Higher in the band, this may be linked to the idea of racial discrimination, though the points made will be based on assertion rather than sociological evidence and reasoning.
- 7–12 Lower in the band, answers may focus mainly on describing the poverty and inequality experienced by many ethnic minority groups, though this will be linked in a basic way to a discussion of racial discrimination. Higher in the band, answers may provide a solid account of the part that racial discrimination may play in explaining the poverty experienced by many ethnic minority groups. Alternatively, a more limited discussion of racial discrimination will be combined with a few basic references to other relevant factors that may explain why many ethnic minority groups are trapped in poverty.
- 13–18 Different explanations of ethnic inequality will be explored at this level, but at the lower end there will be little or no attempt at assessment. One approach would be to focus on the contrast between structural and cultural explanations, though it would also be possible to address the question in less theoretical terms through references to relevant studies of the poverty and inequality experienced by ethnic minority groups. Higher in the band, there will be a basic attempt to assess the explanations offered.
- 19–25 As for the previous band, except that the assessment will be more developed and better informed. The limitations of explaining ethnic poverty/inequality purely in terms of racial discrimination will be noted and, higher in the band, candidates may also assess the strengths and weaknesses of alternative explanations, such as those within the functionalist and Marxist traditions. Appropriate references to post-modernist accounts may also feature in the best answers. Answers that distinguish accurately between different ethnic minority groups and the levels of poverty/inequality characteristic of each group are likely to feature in this band.