

MARK SCHEME for the May/June 2013 series

9699 SOCIOLOGY

9699/23

Paper 2 (Principles 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.

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Page 2	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

1 There are different views about the role that personal values should play in sociological research. Some sociologists favour a value-committed approach to their work. They believe that the purpose of research is to make the world a better place. This means that they are concerned about how their research data is used and whose interests it serves. A contrasting view is held by sociologists who favour the positivist approach. They believe that the researcher should remain objective and *value-free* at all times. The purpose of sociological enquiry, in this view, is to search for the truth. What use is made of the information generated through sociological research is not the concern of the sociologist, the positivist argues.

(a) What is meant by the term *value-free*?

Value-free describes an approach to research whereby the researcher tries to ensure that their personal beliefs and presuppositions have no influence over the research process and the conclusions drawn from it. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'unbiased research' or 'not influenced by values'. [2]

(b) Describe two difficulties in maintaining objectivity in sociological research.

Difficulties in maintaining objectivity in sociological research include: sympathy with the research subjects, 'going native', intrusion of personal bias, poorly constructed research schedule and procedures, influence of career ambitions, pressures from research sponsors. One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks). [4]

(c) Explain how sociological research may be used to bring about improvements in society.

0–4 A few simple points about the nature of sociological research would be worth 1–2 marks. Some assertions about the role of the sociologist in society might merit 3–4 marks.

5–8 A summary of a few examples of how sociological research has been used to bring about improvements in society, such as studies of poverty and discrimination, is likely to be worth 5–6 marks. Similarly, a sound account of the ideas of thinkers such as Becker and Gouldner on how sociology might help to bring about improvements in society would also fit the lower part of the band. To reach the top part of the band, the explanation needs to reflect the fact that there are different examples and/or views that illustrate how sociological research might contribute to bringing about improvements in society. [8]

Page 3	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

(d) Assess the positivist view that objectivity is important when carrying out sociological research.

- 0–4 A simple attempt to explain what is meant by ‘objectivity’, with no further development, would fit the lower part of the band. A few simple points about the nature of the positivist perspective would gain 3–4 marks.
- 5–8 A basic account of the positivist perspective, with links to the issue of objectivity perhaps left implicit, would fit the lower half of the band. A basic account of the positivist perspective, with clear links to the issue of objectivity, would gain 7–8 marks. There may be little or no attempt at assessment at this level.
- 9–11 A good account of the positivist perspective and the emphasis given to the importance of objectivity will be a feature of answers at this level. There will also be an attempt to assess the importance of objectivity when carrying out sociological research. Lower in the band the assessment may be through juxtaposition of the positivist and interpretivist perspectives. To reach the top of the band, there must be some direct assessment of the strengths and/or limitations of the positivist position on objectivity. [11]

Page 4	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

2 Secondary sources that are used in sociological research may be quantitative or qualitative. Official statistics are an example of a quantitative secondary source. They are collected by the government using social surveys such as the census. Such sources are valuable in sociological research because they are easily accessible and much more detailed than any data sociologists could produce. The census is the only survey that tries to include the whole of the population and participation is a legal requirement. Some sociologists in the *positivist* tradition, such as Durkheim, have seen official statistics as both a valid and a reliable source of data. However, interpretivists have warned that official statistics have a number of limitations and caution must be applied when using this data in sociological research. Interpretivists see more value in using qualitative data sources.

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

A positivist is a sociologist who considers that the methods and procedures of the natural sciences provide an appropriate model for sociological research. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as someone who is scientific in their approach or a believer in the value of science. [2]

(b) Describe two types of qualitative secondary sources that may be used in sociological research.

Examples of qualitative secondary sources include historical documents, diaries, novels, letters, biographies, newspapers, video recordings. One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks). [4]

(c) Explain why some sociologists think that caution must be applied when using official statistics in sociological research.

0–4 A few observations about the nature of official statistics, with only limited relevance to the question, would fit the lower part of the band. One or two basic points about the limitations of using official statistics in sociological research would trigger the higher part of the band.

5–8 A sound account of a range of limitations in using official statistics, perhaps more focused on practical issues rather than theoretical debates would merit 5 or 6 marks. To go higher, there must be some coverage of theoretical issues, perhaps through reference to the interpretivist critique of official statistics and/or by discussing relevant concepts, such as validity, reliability and objectivity. [8]

Page 5	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

(d) Assess the strengths and limitations of using qualitative secondary sources in sociological research.

- 0–4 A basic attempt to distinguish quantitative and qualitative data, might be worth 1 or 2 marks. A few simple points about one or more types of qualitative secondary sources would trigger the top half of the band.
- 5–8 Lower in the band, answers may be confined to a few basic points about the strengths or limitations of qualitative secondary sources, perhaps with the focus mainly on practical considerations. Higher in the band, both strengths and limitations will be addressed, though consideration of theoretical issues may still be rather weak.
- 9–11 Answers at this level will demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of qualitative secondary sources, and this will include coverage of relevant theoretical issues. There will also be an attempt to assess the overall value of using qualitative secondary sources in sociological research. Lower in the band, the assessment may be confined to one or two key points. A fuller assessment will be required to reach the top of the band. Reward candidates who distinguish between the strengths and limitations of different types of qualitative secondary sources. [11]

Page 6	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

3 In most modern industrialist societies, women earn less than men and are more likely to be employed on a part-time or temporary basis only. A high percentage of women are found in lower-paid occupations such as clerical work, repetitive assembly work, cleaning and catering. Even where women are employed in professional occupations, it tends to be in the lower-paid professions in areas such as health care and education. More women experience downward social mobility than upward, while for men the reverse is true. Men fill most of the top jobs in industry and the professions. This means that women are largely excluded from the positions in society that carry most power and prestige.

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

Prestige refers to the value or esteem that is attached by members of society to a particular role or social position. Two marks for a clear and accurate definition; one mark for a partial definition, such as 'good reputation' or 'jobs for which people have a lot of respect'. [2]

(b) Describe two reasons why women are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis.

Reasons why women are likely to be employed on a part-time basis include: position in the secondary labour market; domestic responsibilities make it difficult to take on full-time paid employment; part of the reserve army of labour; discrimination by male employers; socialisation may encourage lower career ambitions. One mark for the example plus one mark for development (2 × 2 marks). [4]

(c) Explain why men are more likely than women to experience upward social mobility.

0–4 A few points about the nature of social mobility, with little direct relevance to the analysis of gender divisions, would fit the lower part of the band. Some general observations about why men are more likely to experience upward social mobility, with few links to appropriate textbook sociology, would merit 3 or 4 marks.

5–8 A sound attempt to explain a range of sociological explanations for why men may be more likely than women to experience upward social mobility, would fit the lower part of the band. Higher in the band, the answer may include references to relevant theoretical positions or be well supported with links to studies. [8]

Page 7	Mark Scheme	Syllabus	Paper
	GCE AS/A LEVEL – May/June 2013	9699	23

(d) Assess feminists explanations for why so few women fill the top positions in industry and the professions.

- 0–4 A few simple points about gender inequality in general, would trigger the lower part of the band. A simple attempt to explain why women fill so few top positions in industry and the professions would merit 3 or 4 marks.
- 5–8 Answers at this level will refer to the feminist perspective, though lower in the band the links may be implicit only. A general explanation in response to the question that is couched in feminist terms, would be worth 5 or 6 marks. To go higher, more than one strand of feminist theory needs to be covered. This is likely to be achieved through references to the liberal feminist, radical feminist and Marxist feminist divide.
- 9–11 To reach this band, there must be a good account of two or more feminist theories that attempt to explain why women fill so few of the top positions in industry and the professions. There will also be an attempt to assess these theories. At the bottom of the band, the assessment may be in terms of juxtaposing feminist theories with other relevant perspectives, such as the Marxist and functionalist. Higher in the band, there will also be an explicit evaluation of the strengths and/or limitations of feminist accounts. [11]