

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11

11 The Family

Key messages

- Candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate sufficient time for answering both **Sections A** and **B** of the paper.
- Candidates need to show that they have a clear understanding of sociological terms and concepts.
- Good essay answers include analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.
- Low-scoring answers often lack any sociological evidence.

General comments

This is a new paper covering a topic area previously part of paper 9699/31. The depth of knowledge that some candidates demonstrated and their ability to analyse relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner was very pleasing. Less creditable were answers that addressed the broad subject of the question without responding directly to the analytical issues raised by the specific wording of the question. Such answers tended to be rather descriptive and lacking in clear understanding of the subtleties of the question set. Marks may be gained for knowledge with this type of answer, but there was often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category might benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly structured, analytical responses to the type of questions that are set for this paper. Higher level responses made use of some textbook knowledge. It should be emphasised that answers relying exclusively on general knowledge of the question topic, such as when there are no references to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, invariably achieved low marks. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates have access to the recommended CIE textbooks and to a selection of other relevant texts from the CIE recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following factors influencing their success in answering questions in each section of the paper. In **Section A** of the paper, candidates should be aware of the need to spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of the question so that they achieve sufficient reward for each part they are answering. A number of candidates wrote long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to **1(c)** and **1(d)**. Others spent far too much time and effort on either **1(c)** or **1(d)**. For many, this resulted in an overall low mark for **Question 1** and meant less time available for **Section B**.

In **Section B** of the paper, almost all candidates correctly selected **one** out of the **two** questions. There were some very well constructed and knowledgeable answers from those candidates who had taken time to plan their responses. These candidates made appropriate use of relevant sociological studies and concepts. A large number of candidates offered a hurried or incomplete answer, occasionally in a listed format rather than an essay type response. Often this indicated that they had not allocated an equal amount of time for answering each section of the paper. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on time allocation issues.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The stimulus material accompanying this question provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling candidates to direct their attention to what was being asked, and to offer an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Most were able to use the stimulus material to offer some form of response and gain some reward.

- (a) The term 'beanpole family' was not well understood. A large number answered this incorrectly by defining other types of family, including 'nuclear', 'reconstituted' and 'extended'. Some gave partial definitions only, for example, simply referring to the shape of the family tree being 'long and thin'. Others described it as being 'multi-generational, with fewer children than in the past'. A few gave more developed definitions, describing the family structure as 'long and thin', with fewer children being born in each generation and households becoming 'multi-generational', with close links between grandchildren and their grandparents. Answers similar to this gained full marks.
- (b) Many candidates were able to identify one or two reasons for the *existence* of lone-parent families, for example, by stating that the 'death of a partner would be a reason for a lone-parent family', or because 'one partner decided to leave the family'. Such responses did not address the question set, which required candidates to describe reasons for the *increase* in the number of lone parent families. A large number simply described what lone-parent families were. Some gained marks for identifying a reason for an increase, such as increased numbers of women deciding to have children without a partner, gaining a mark, but did not develop the answer further.

Candidates gaining full marks for this question were able to identify two reasons, and develop their answers further by commenting on the increase. For example, identifying as a reason for the increase, 'the increased numbers of married couples choosing to divorce, leaving one parent with the responsibility of looking after the children' and developing this by expanding on the reason, 'because over the past 30 years the law has changed making it much easier and quicker for a married couple to divorce. Before this time it was very difficult to do so'. A second appropriate reason was identified and described, such as the increased number of women able to make the decision to have a child without a partner, because in recent years they have better career opportunities and earnings, so can afford it. Some candidates made appropriate reference to current areas of conflict which have had a consequence of creating more lone-parent families, such as wars in areas of Africa and in Iraq and Afghanistan. A few referenced major changes in social attitudes towards single girls or women with children compared with the past.

- (c) Some excellent responses to this question were from candidates who remained focused on what was asked in the question and based their answer on *modern industrial society*. Most candidates were able to identify some reasons why some individuals choose to live alone. Increased rates of divorce, changing attitudes towards marriage, changing opportunities for women and the consequences of greater life expectancy were some of the reasons stated. Some responses simply described the types of people who might live alone, without offering a reason why, and others described the benefits of living alone. There were candidates who confused this question with 1b and described the reasons for the existence of lone-parent families. Some of the more focused responses included relevant sociological evidence, such as recent divorce rates. Others made reference to Giddens or Beck and the trends in society leading to people seeking and expecting greater independence. By comparing the situation today with the past, these candidates addressed an important part of the question which was somewhat ignored in other responses.
- (d) There was a large variation in the quality of answers to this question. Basic responses simply described what traditional families were. Some responses given were very generalised, in broad terms, of the change from agricultural or pre-industrial 'extended' families to the nuclear family of industrial societies. Others described the different types of family found in societies, some spending far too much time on describing e.g. the Nayar.

Those gaining higher marks did so in a number of different ways. Some definition of 'traditional' was offered, either as the nuclear family associated with Functionalist theory or the classic extended family. Most agreed that such families were disappearing and explained that today there were a range of alternative types, using some sociological support such as Parsons, Murdock,

Young and Willmott, Allan and Crow and the Rapaports. Some commented on changing roles. Some answers were better balanced and more detailed. Family diversity was clearly recognised and supported with reference to sociological evidence, also drawing attention to the continuation of traditional families in modern industrial societies, for example by referring to Chester and Fletcher or using some supporting data demonstrating the popularity of the nuclear family. Some made reference to different sociological perspectives on the family, contrasting Functionalist, New Right, Marxist and Feminist views. A few drew on the work of post-modernist sociologists such as Stacey. Others offered higher level responses by producing answers which addressed the question more directly. Rather than juxtaposing the points of view, these candidates gave more detail and also assessed the extent. The best of these also provided a meaningful conclusion rather than just offering a summary of what they had written. Many of these answers were lengthy leaving less time to complete **Section B**.

Section B

Candidates were required to answer *either* **Question 2** or **Question 3** in this section of the paper.

Question 2 was selected by the majority. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated time to planning their response. However, a large number of candidates offered hurried, limited or list-like answers in this section of the paper. In most cases this indicated that they had not left sufficient time to respond effectively to what was being asked. Candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to answering their option question in **Section B** and also note that the question carries 50 % of the total marks for this paper.

Question 2

Some answers consisted of unsupported basic statements describing the nuclear family. Others simply outlined a general move from extended to nuclear families. It was particularly noted that some who had written lengthy responses to question 1d tended to offer short or incomplete answers to this question, sometimes running out of time. The majority, however, were familiar with the Functionalist theory of the family and most were able to demonstrate some sociological knowledge of the issue. Many candidates supported the view that the nuclear family did fit the needs of society, basing their answer on the work of Parsons and Murdock. More developed answers considered alternative views such as those of Marxist and Feminist sociologists in terms of the nuclear family fitting the needs of a particular type of society, a capitalist or a patriarchal one. However, large numbers of these *described* the views, rather than *assessing* the Functionalist view. Some questioned the idea of 'fit' by referring to the 'dark side' of the nuclear family. Others addressed the issue of 'extent' by comparing different societies' needs, arguing that traditional agrarian societies relied upon extended families for production compared with the needs of a modern industrial society. A few mentioned the importance of culture and religion in shaping the family structure of some societies. In some cases, good use was made of historical examples such as the Nayar. These answers were among the small number who attempted to address all parts of the question. Some concluded their essays by referring to the changing needs of society over time, often referring to the work of the Rapaports on diversity and post-modernists such as Stacey and Beck.

Question 3

Most answers to this question were very generalised and assertive, with limited sociological knowledge and understanding. Many painted a very biased and negative picture of the position of the elderly in society concentrating on their lack of a useful role, or the disadvantages of being old. Others referred to some advantages available to the elderly such as cheaper fares, priority seats and shopping discounts. These were low-scoring. A small number of candidates described some positive benefits for parents of having elderly relatives able to offer economic and other support for the family. A minority of candidates made reference to the contrasting position of the elderly in different societies, emphasising the higher status of the elderly in Asian or African societies compared with the lower status of the elderly in western societies such as the USA or the UK. Better responses provided a more balanced and detailed consideration of the issues and offered supporting evidence, such as Giddens and/or Vincent, in considering the limited status of the elderly in western society compared with some other societies e.g. Japanese society.

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Paper 9699/12

12 The Family

Key messages

- Candidates may wish to allocate an equal amount of time to **Sections A** and **B**, as they are each worth 25 marks.
- Better answers demonstrated a clear understanding of sociological terms and concepts.
- Better essay answers included an analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.
- Lower-scoring answers would have benefitted from the inclusion of more sociological evidence.

General Comments

This new paper was first introduced this session, and covered a topic area which was formerly a part of paper 9699/32. Many candidates demonstrated a good depth of knowledge and an ability to analyse relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner. Less creditable answers were more general in their approach, and did not always respond directly to the analytical issues raised by the question. Such answers tended to be descriptive and often lacked a clear understanding of the subtleties of the question set. Some marks can be gained for this type of answer, but there is often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category may benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly-structured, analytical responses to the questions that are set for this paper. Most candidates appeared to recognise the need to use appropriate textbook knowledge in their responses. Answers that relied solely on general knowledge of the question topic, where there were no references to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, received lower marks. Centres are recommended to use the recommended Cambridge textbooks and a selection of other relevant texts from the Cambridge recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following factors influencing their success in answering questions in each Section of the paper.

For **Section A**, candidates would benefit from observing the marks for each question, to ensure they spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of **Question 1**. A number of candidates wrote very long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to the essay type responses required for **1(c)** and **1(d)**. This invariably resulted in an overall low mark for the question.

There were no rubric errors observed in **Section B** of the paper, and candidates generally correctly selected one out of the two option questions in this section of the paper. There were some very well-constructed and knowledgeable answers from candidates who had taken time to plan their response in advance. These candidates also made appropriate use in their answers of relevant sociological studies and concepts. Candidates can ensure they provide complete and detailed answers in essay format by allocating their time more evenly amongst the questions. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on how to use their time effectively in the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

The stimulus material which accompanies this question provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to the requirements of the question, and offered an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Where there was evidence of a less assured sociological knowledge and understanding, candidates were still able to use the stimulus phrases to offer some form of response and to gain some reward.

- (a) There were many clear and accurate explanations offered, but the term *family diversity* was not always fully understood. Some candidates described why family diversity existed, instead of offering an appropriate definition. Some candidates limited their responses by only naming different types of families, or offered a response that confused diversity with division based on geography and families becoming dispersed. Some candidates who were less sure of the answer offered an improvised definition, which gained some reward.
- (b) There was a varied quality of responses to this question. The better answers demonstrated a clear understanding of Murdock's definition of the family and gave a full and accurate description of two households which did not fit with the definition. These candidates developed their response to explain why they did not fit. A number of candidates would have benefitted from a deeper understanding of the concept to ensure their examples were accurate and appropriate. A few candidates named cohabiting relationships as an example, but limited their response by not referring to the relationship as *not socially approved* in a society. Answers which described why marriage ends, or argued that families vary in size or structure, without the inclusion of appropriate examples, were minimally credited.
- (c) The best responses tailored their answer to the requirements of the question and responded to *why* the family may be changing in a *modern industrial society*. These candidates identified the changes, if briefly, and then explained why this had happened. Many candidates also included an analysis of the different types of family in society, and offered some evaluation as to which type might be best in a particular society. Although this was not asked for in the question, it clearly showed some enthusiasm for the topic. A number of candidates could have scored higher marks by specifically tailoring their answer to the question, which focused on a *modern industrial society*. Some answers only concentrated only on Young and Willmott, and the four stages of the family, and were thus not sufficiently tailored to the requirements of the question. Other responses offered only a feminist critique of the situation of present-day families, or argued solely along the lines of why families are not changing. Responses which gained fewer marks included family functions and roles without explaining why the family may be changing.
- (d) Overall, the question provided a challenge for many candidates and there were some very varied responses. The best responses were from candidates who offered very full and analytical answers and demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural issues, and gave examples of family structures in and across different societies. These candidates also made use of relevant sociological concepts, theories and empirical studies and occasionally argued that many so-called deviant families are derivatives of a nuclear family structure. There was some confusion demonstrated by a number of candidates over the work of Parsons, Laslett and Anderson. The use of statistical information with respect to households was sometimes questionable or inaccurate, with limited reference to the number of individuals that it might include. Lower-scoring answers provided answers with minimal descriptive overviews of different forms of family structure, and made little reference to contemporary society. Such answers frequently made use of overly historical material and offered stereotypical views about some family types or structures. Consequently these responses did not include any valid analysis or assessment of the proposal set out in the question.

Section B

These essay-type questions appeared to provide candidates with a reasonable level of challenge, although **Question 2** was more popular than **Question 3**. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated some time to planning their response prior to answering the question. Some candidates would have benefitted from allocating more time to answering the question.

Question 2

This was a popular and relatively challenging question. There were some excellent responses which successfully linked descriptions of family life and patriarchal influence, and identified examples of any changes that have taken place in modern industrial and other developing societies. These answers also gave clear descriptions of contrasting sociological theories and concepts, and included an analysis of these competing perspectives within the context of *modern industrial society*. A number of strong candidates also offered a sustained argument which incorporated assessment and evaluation of the differing perspectives, and included a conclusion.

The concept of patriarchy was generally well-understood. Some responses could have included more detail and support from sociological principles. These responses often included examples of how men, typically husbands, were seen as dominant in the family, but few responses mentioned the *modern industrial society*.

Many candidates offered a one-sided view, which included evidence of change and the gradual decline of patriarchy, or, alternatively, an argument weighted towards the idea that patriarchy continues to exist in the family, and in society. Strong answers mentioned the traditional views of the family and a move towards more egalitarian relationships, and were supported by relevant theories.

Question 3

There were a number of strong responses, which made excellent use of relevant sociological theory, studies and concepts. These candidates referred to the work of Pilcher, Jenks and Postman and other relevant theorists, and also offered an analysis of the work of Aries and the social construction of childhood.

There were some useful references to time, place, culture and space, and how children may be pressured into becoming subservient in the family, and as workers in society. Some candidates also discussed the freedom and constraints of childhood and mentioned indulgence, abuse and manipulation and the effects of exposure to a modern global media. These candidates analysed and assessed relevant issues and offered a balanced argument and an appropriate conclusion.

This question was less popular, and some answers included limited sociological knowledge and understanding of the topic. Many of these answers did not fully address the question, and instead superficially argued that childhood was a positive experience for all children, or limited their answers to the discussion of certain aspects of socialisation. Some candidates focused their responses on parental expectations and the pressure on children to succeed in their studies.

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Paper 9699/13

13 The Family

Key Messages

- Candidates may wish to allocate an equal amount of time to **Sections A** and **B**, as they are each worth 25 marks.
- Better answers demonstrated a clear understanding of sociological terms and concepts.
- Better essay answers included an analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.
- Lower-scoring answers would have benefitted from the inclusion of more sociological evidence.

General Comments

This new paper was first introduced this session, and covered a topic area which was formerly a part of paper 9699/33. Many candidates demonstrated a good depth of knowledge and an ability to analyse relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner. Less creditable answers were more general in their approach, and did not always respond directly to the analytical issues raised by the question. Such answers tended to be descriptive and often lacked a clear understanding of the subtleties of the question set. Some marks can be gained for this type of answer, but there is often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category may benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly-structured, analytical responses to the questions that are set for this paper. Most candidates appeared to recognise the need to use appropriate textbook knowledge in their responses. Answers that relied solely on general knowledge of the question topic, where there were no references to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, received lower marks. Centres are recommended to use the recommended Cambridge textbooks and a selection of other relevant texts from the Cambridge recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following factors influencing their success in answering questions in each Section of the paper.

For **Section A**, candidates would benefit from observing the marks for each question, to ensure they spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of **Question 1**. A number of candidates wrote very long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to the essay type responses required for **1(c)** and **1(d)**. This invariably resulted in an overall low mark for the question.

There were no rubric errors observed in **Section B** of the paper, and candidates generally correctly selected one out of the two option questions in this section of the paper. There were some very well-constructed and knowledgeable answers from candidates who had taken time to plan their response in advance. These candidates also made appropriate use in their answers of relevant sociological studies and concepts. Candidates are encouraged to provide complete and detailed answers in essay format by allocating their time more evenly amongst the questions. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on how to use their time effectively in the examination.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

The accompanying stimulus material provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to the requirements of the question, and offered an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Where there was evidence of less assured

sociological knowledge and understanding, candidates were still able to use the stimulus phrases to offer some form of response and to gain some reward.

- (a) There were a few clear and accurate explanations offered, but the term *adolescence* was not always fully understood. Candidates who wrote a partially accurate definition gained some credit.
- (b) The quality of responses was varied. Many candidates understood the term *universal* and provided two clearly different and separate aspects of the *process of primary socialisation*. Some candidates only discussed one aspect, and others only responded with examples of secondary socialisation, or concentrated on Parsons' two family functions.
- (c) Higher-scoring responses fully addressed the question by referring to the *modern industrial society*. These answers explained childhood in terms of a social construct, considered how and why the length of childhood varies in different societies, and identified the causes of any changes to the concept and status of childhood in modern industrial society.

Responses to the question concerning the nature of childhood in pre-industrial society could often have been considerably shorter. Higher-scoring responses offered detailed, descriptive accounts of what children do nowadays, and focused on both outcomes and reasons for change. Some candidates concentrated on Aries' theories and the mini-adult aspects of childhood long ago.

- (d) Overall, the question provided a challenge, and there was a variety of responses. High-scoring answers were detailed and analytical, and demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding family life, and the influence of family life on a child's experience of childhood. Lower-scoring responses typically provided a superficial and descriptive overview of different forms of family structures. Some candidates could have gained more marks by using more recent sociological evidence, or by offering less stereotypical views of family types. These responses often demonstrated limited sociological understanding and assessment of the question.

Section B

These essay-type questions were equally popular with candidates, and seemed to provide a reasonable level of challenge. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated time to plan their response prior to answering the question. To ensure candidates have enough time to plan and fully answer the question, candidates may wish to distribute their time equally between both sections of the paper.

Question 2

This proved to be a popular question. Higher-scoring answers addressed the requirements of the question, and linked descriptions of family life, and changes to its structure, with the concept of *lifestyle choices*. Many candidates offered complete and analytical answers which demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural issues, and included relevant examples from different societies. Some candidates also included an appropriate assessment of factors that influence the ability of people, and more specifically, women, to be more pro-active for change and diversity in family life in society. Assessments were often well-supported with the use of relevant theory. Some answers included minimal reference to *lifestyle choices*, and many answers provided solely descriptive accounts of different types of family, or provided an overly historical account of family life.

Question 3

This was a popular question, and it enabled candidates to offer a balanced review of gender roles and changes within the family. The higher-scoring answers accurately interpreted the question, and provided a solid account of the variety of *conjugal roles* that exist in and across societies. Many of these answers included a well-informed and sustained assessment of the different interpretations of *equality*. Most candidates also incorporated relevant sociological theory, studies or concepts in their responses. Some answers demonstrated a less detailed understanding of *conjugal roles*, and often equated *conjugal* with *equal*. This reduced the overall strength of their argument, and limited any analysis or assessment of relevant issues relating to *inequality in the family* included in their answers.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/21 21 Theory and Methods

Key messages

- Candidates would do well to make use of references to appropriate concepts and theories.
- References to post-modernist and post-feminist writers were a feature of many of the best answers.
- Evidence of assessment skills is required to gain high marks for the essay questions and for the part (d) questions.

General comments

In many cases, the responses were well constructed and included references to appropriate sociological concepts, theories, evidence and debates. Good answers demonstrated both a comprehensive understanding of the relevant subject matter and a high standard of analysis, assessment and references to the post-modernist perspective. Some responses would have achieved higher marks by demonstrating a better understanding of the differences between the main theoretical perspectives in sociology. More use of references to relevant sociological studies would be another way of gaining higher marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Good answers recognised that the term 'correlations' refers to a measurement of the strength of the relationship between two or more variables. There were a lot of answers that demonstrated a partial understanding of the term; for example, by noting that correlations are an indication of links between two or more variables. Some answers confused 'correlations' with 'causation'.
- (b) Good answers described accurately two reasons why postal questionnaires might be used in sociological research. Answers that discussed the strengths of questionnaires in general, without focusing on the postal aspect specifically, gained no marks.
- (c) Good answers provided detailed explanations of at least three factors that a researcher should take into account when designing a questionnaire.
- (d) High scoring answers made good use of relevant concepts and theories to provide a sustained assessment of the strengths and limitations of using questionnaires in sociological research.

Question 2

Good answers often correctly interpreted the question as an opportunity to discuss the relative claims of the structuralist and interactionist perspectives. Some high scoring answers made relevant links to Giddens' theory of structuration. There were some answers that covered the interactionist perspective without contrasting it with the structuralist approach. Other answers lacked links to relevant theories.

Question 3

Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of different strands of feminist theory. The best answers made an assessment of the relevance of feminist theory for understanding modern industrial societies. Other answers demonstrated a sound knowledge of feminist theory, but failed to provide the necessary assessment to merit high marks. Some responses used personal observation rather than sociological concepts and theories to address the issues raised by the question and consequentially did not attract high marks.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22 22 Theory and Methods

Key messages

- Candidates would do well to draw links between concepts, methods and theoretical perspectives.
- Answers to the part **(a)** question need to be precise to high marks.
- Answers to the part **(b)** questions require sufficient development to achieve high marks.
- Evidence of assessment skills is required to gain high marks for the essay questions and for the part **(d)**.

General comments

The standard of performance overall for this paper was high, candidate answers showed a good understanding of a wide range of relevant sociological theory, including the latest contributions from post-modernist thinkers. These answers demonstrated excellent skills in constructing answers that included high quality analysis and assessment of the issues raised by each question. Other candidates performed well in terms of their knowledge and understanding of the relevant subject matter, but they provided insufficient analysis and assessment to merit high marks. Candidates in this category would benefit from going beyond mere description of a theory or explanation, to discuss the relevant strengths and limitations of the ideas they are considering.

A minority of candidates answered the questions almost entirely in terms of general knowledge and/or personal opinion. Such answers lack reference to appropriate sociological sources and so merit only low marks. Candidates who performed well demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the relevant textbook material for the syllabus.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

- (a)** Some candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the term 'socially constructed' by providing a full definition. There were some answers that conflated the term with the concept of socialisation; demonstrating a partial understanding of what socially constructed means.
- (b)** Good answers referred to examples such as role models, dress codes for boys and girls, differentiated toys and games, and differential treatment of boys and girls by parents. Some candidate responses defined socialisation in general terms, failing to make relevant links with the family.
- (c)** High scoring answers made good use of concepts, theories and studies to explain how infants learn to interact with others. The work of G H Mead was often quoted to good effect. Lower scoring answers relied on personal observation more than sociological knowledge.
- (d)** There were some good answers that provided a detailed account of feminist explanations of gender differences. High scoring answers often differentiated between strands of feminist theory. Some answers lacked evidence of assessment, though they often included a sound descriptive account of feminist theory. There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little understanding of the feminist perspective.

Questions 2

Candidates who performed well demonstrated a sound understanding of the Marxist model, often making effective use of relevant concepts such as class conflict, ideology, economic determinism, and base/superstructure. Assessment of the Marxist perspective was also a feature of good responses. Some answers lacked balance, focusing either on 'strengths' or 'limitations'. Better answers considered both the strengths and the limitations of the Marxist model.

Questions 3

Good responses recognised that the question offered the opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of triangulation. Candidates who performed well considered both the strengths and the limitations of using triangulation in sociological research. References to relevant theoretical perspectives and thinkers such as Bryman, was another feature of good answers.

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Paper 9699/23

23 Theory and Methods

Key messages

- Candidates would do well to make use of references to appropriate concepts and theories.
- References to post-modernist and post-feminist writers were a feature of many of the best answers.
- Evidence of assessment skills is required to gain high marks for the essay questions and for the part (d) questions.

General comments

Many candidates demonstrated in-depth knowledge and understanding of the relevant topic areas and were able to offer analysis and evaluation of appropriate sociological explanations and theories. Candidates who performed well demonstrated application of knowledge in a way that provided a reasoned and well-argued response to the issues raised by the specific wording of each question. Much can be achieved in this respect through the practice of essay writing technique, with the candidates encouraged to appreciate the importance of focus and structure in the construction of well organised answers. Teaching candidates to distinguish between descriptive and analytical responses to questions is another way to raise awareness of what is required to secure high marks in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

- (a) Good responses recognised that social policy refers to the actions taken by government to maintain and improve the welfare of citizens. Its purpose is to deal with and resolve potential and actual social problems, such as crime and poverty. Some answers confused social policy with law making and/or law enforcement.
- (b) Good answers provided an accurate account of two reasons why a researcher might choose more than one method.
- (c) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the differences between social problems and sociological problems. Some candidates had difficulty explaining the idea of a sociological problem, though they were able to describe accurately the idea of social problem.
- (d) Good candidate responses discussed different views about the role of sociological research, covering both value committed and value neutral perspectives. High scoring answers also included an assessment of the view that the main role of sociological research is to help create a better society. Some answers explained the idea of value committed sociology, but would do better to consider alternative views about the role of sociological research.

Questions 2

Candidates who performed well demonstrated a good understanding of the post modernist contribution to debates about social identity today. These responses also included a sound assessment of the strengths and limitations of the post modernist viewpoint. Other answers demonstrated only a limited understanding of post modernist theory and relied more on a discussion of other theories, such as the functionalist and feminist accounts of socialisation.

Questions 3

Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the different types of interview, including semi-structured interviews. The assessment of the strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews was also well informed. Use of relevant studies to illustrate key points was a feature of many high scoring answers. Some answers were better informed about interviews in general than semi-structured interviews specifically. Responses of this kind would do better to distinguish between the different types of interview and to expand upon points made for and/or against the use of interviews in general.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/31 31 Social Inequality and Opportunity
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Key messages

- High scoring answers often made good use of references to relevant sociological theories.
- To score high marks answers demonstrating analysis and assessment are required.
- Answers that did not do very well were often too short or too tangential to the question.

General comments

Most of candidate answers demonstrated good sociological knowledge and understanding. However, many answers offered detailed descriptive accounts of relevant sociological concepts and theories, but failed to offer the analysis and assessment that is also required in order to gain high marks. Some responses failed to address the specific wording of the question and contained too much tangential material to merit more than a low mark. In order to achieve higher marks, it is recommended that more attention is given to practicing exam skills, including the ability to interpret questions accurately and to construct answers that dissect and probe the relevant analytical issues. More use of references to relevant studies as a way of illustrating key arguments, would be another way in which candidates could gain higher marks.

There were no common misinterpretations of the questions. Questions **1**, **3** and **5** proved the most popular. There were comparatively few answers to questions **4** and **6**. Most candidates appeared able to write three answers fully in the time available. There were no common rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

- (a) Good answers explained the relationship between the hidden curriculum and gender inequality in Schools in some detail, making useful references to concepts, theories and studies. There were some answers that demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the hidden curriculum, but failed to link the material well to debates about gender inequality in Schools. Lower scoring answers were often limited to a few observations about gender differences in educational achievement.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a detailed account of the factors influencing the educational achievement of minority ethnic groups, with the concept of racism at the heart of the discussion. Good answers also included an assessment of the claim that racism is the main factor explaining the educational achievement of minority ethnic groups. There were a lot of answers in the middle of the mark range that identified some possible links between racism and the educational performance of minority ethnic groups, but generally lacked an assessment of the view on which the question was based.

Questions 2

- (a) Good answers recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the Marxist theory of education. Good responses referred to Bowles and Gintis' correspondence theory. There were some low scoring answers that relied on a few personal observations about the links between education and the economy.
- (b) Good answers recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the meritocracy theory and its links to education. To achieve high marks it was necessary to assess the view that

the education system helps to improve the life chances of all members of society. The assessment was often delivered through a consideration of alternative views that identify various sources of inequality within the education system.

Questions 3

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of several reasons why children in low income countries may be vulnerable to economic exploitation. Some candidate answers made effective use of references to studies and examples from particular low income countries. Low scoring answers were limited to just one or two relevant points about child exploitation.
- (b) There were some high scoring answers that identified several reasons why low income countries may struggle to become rich. References to relevant theories of development were often a feature of good responses. The best answers included an assessment of the view on which the question was based. Many candidate answers gave reasons why low incomes countries may struggle to become rich, without providing the assessment required for high marks.

Questions 4

- (a) Good answers discussed several definitions of development and explained why no one definition is universally acceptable. Other candidate answers demonstrated little understanding of the debates about how development should be defined.
- (b) Good answers provided a detailed account of the impact of economic globalisation and whether it brings greater opportunity for all. Some candidates did well to site examples of the impact of globalisation in different countries and regions. Answers at the lower end of the mark range often lack a clear understanding of the concept of globalisation and often focused on a discussion of development issues in general.

Questions 5

- (a) Good answers discussed a range of factors that may influence the production of television news, including the influence of owners, editors, journalists, viewers, governments, and lobby groups. There were some low scoring answers that were confined to a few observations about the content of television news, with no direct links to the wording of the question.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a detailed account of the impact of the new media on the traditional media. Good responses also provided a sustained assessment of the idea that the new media are undermining the power of the traditional media. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a few limited observations about the nature of the new media and the implications for the traditional media.

Questions 6

- (a) There were some good answers that discussed a range of factors that make it difficult to study the impact that television has on viewers. Some candidates made effective use of references to studies of the media. There were some low scoring answers that were limited to just one or two general observations about problems that might arise when studying the media.
- (b) Good answers discussed several theories of how the media influence human behavior. Many of the responses included well chosen references to the hypodermic syringe and uses and gratifications models.

Questions 7

- (a) There were some high scoring responses that demonstrated a good understanding of several difficulties in measuring the extent of religiosity in society. Other answers were confined to describing just one or two relevant difficulties.
- (b) Good answers provided a detailed account of the secularisation thesis and also assessed the view expressed in the question. References to studies and thinkers were a feature of high scoring responses. Other answers demonstrated a more limited understanding of the secularisation thesis and often lacked an assessment.

Questions 8

- (a) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the sociological theory behind the view that religion is a form of social control. Marxist and feminist concepts were widely used in responses that triggered the top mark band. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a few observations about the role of religion in general, with little focus on social control specifically.
- (b) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of what is meant by globalisation and religious fundamentalism. However, many candidate responses struggled to identify the possible links between globalisation and the growth of fundamentalism. Some answers addressed the issues raised by the question in reasonable detail, including references to relevant studies and thinkers.

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Key messages

- High scoring answers often made good use of references to relevant sociological theories.
- To score high marks answers demonstrating analysis and assessment are required.
- Answers that did not do very well were often too short or too tangential to the question.

General comments

Most of candidate answers demonstrated good sociological knowledge and understanding. However, some answers failed to provide the analysis and assessment that is required in order to gain high marks. Some responses failed to address the specific wording of the question and contained too much tangential material to merit more than a low mark. There were also some low scoring answers that relied on general knowledge rather than referring to appropriate sociological sources, such as theories, concepts and research evidence. More use of references to relevant studies as a way of illustrating key arguments, would be one way in which candidates could gain higher marks. Candidates might also demonstrate greater understanding of different strands of thought within major sociological perspectives, such as the feminist and Marxist theories.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

- (a) Good answers considered a range of reasons why a child from a poor family may face obstacles to educational achievement. Some answers were limited to covering just one or two relevant reasons. Answers that were confined to a few general observations about intelligence with little or no direct relevance to the question did not attract high marks.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the links between educational policies and attempts to overcome inequality. Good responses also assessed the view that educational policies can never succeed in overcoming inequality. Other answers described various educational policies, but provided little assessment of their success. Answers at the lower end of the mark range often relied on a few assertions about social mobility in general, with no clear links to education.

Questions 2

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of the hidden curriculum and how it is used in explanations of ethnic differences in educational achievement. There were a lot of answers that made some relevant points about the influence of ethnicity on educational performance, but failed to make appropriate references to theories, studies and research evidence. Low scoring answers often demonstrated little understanding of the concept of the hidden curriculum.
- (b) There were some good answers that recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss interactionist theories of education. To achieve high marks it was necessary to assess the view that labelling is the main reason why working class pupils underachieve at School. The assessment was often delivered through a consideration of alternative views that identify various sources of inequality within the education system. There were some low scoring answers that

demonstrated little understanding of the concept of labelling and the debates about inequality in education.

Questions 3

- (a) There were some good answers that discussed relevant links between the specific characteristics of development in East Asia and wider themes about development in general. Factors that were covered included the impact of a colonial past; relocation of industry from Europe and the US; favourable provision of aid in part linked to US efforts to win support in East Asia during the Cold War; cultural traditions in the region; government systems and policies. Some candidate answers made effective use of references to studies and examples from particular East Asian countries. Low scoring answers were limited to just one or two relevant points about development in the region.
- (b) There were some high scoring answers that identified several strengths and limitations of dependency theories of development. Good answers were often supported with references to appropriate concepts, thinkers and studies. Other answers were limited to a few general observations about the characteristics of low income countries; with no references to dependency theories. Such answers did not attract high marks.

Questions 4

- (a) Good candidate answers were able to offer a full explanation of the demographic transition model. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed only population growth in general, without any reference to the demographic transition model.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the relationship between global poverty and levels of population growth. High scoring answers assessed the view that controlling population growth is the key to reducing global poverty. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed the causes of global poverty in general, without clear reference to the impact of population growth.

Questions 5

- (a) Candidate answers showed clear evidence that they understood the thinking that underpins the pluralist view of the role of the media. Relevant concepts and ideas were explained with a high level of clarity and some detail. There were some low scoring answers that offered some observations about the media in general, with no clear links to the pluralist theory.
- (b) Good answers provided a detailed account of the impact of the ruling class on the content of the media, with the discussion situated clearly within the context of Marxist theory. High scoring responses also provided an assessment of the view that the content of the media reflects the ideas of the ruling class. Lower in the mark range there were some answers that demonstrated only a limited understanding of the Marxist theory of the media.

Questions 6

- (a) There were some good answers that explained the uses and gratification model in some detail, making references to appropriate studies and thinkers. Low scoring answers were often confined to a few isolated comments about how the media influences audiences, with no links to relevant sociological theories.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the postmodernist perspective on the media. High scoring responses also offered a thorough assessment of the strengths and limitations of the postmodernist viewpoint. Other answers provided a comprehensive account of the postmodernist perspective but offered only a limited analysis of the strengths and limitations of the perspective. Such answers did not attract high marks.

Questions 7

- (a) Good answers discussed a range of reasons why declining church attendance may not be an indicator that secularization is occurring. This often included references to relevant thinkers and studies. There were some low scoring answers that were confined to just one or two relevant points about the significance of declining church attendance.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of a range of ways in which religious organisations might seek to maintain their power today. They also provided a sustained assessment of the view that in order to maintain their power, it has been necessary for religious organisations to find new ways of attracting members. There were some low scoring answers that were limited to a few basic points about how religions seek to attract members.

Questions 8

- (a) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the reasons for the growth of new religious movements, with references to relevant theories and thinkers. Low scoring answers were often confined to a few observations about the role of religion in general, with little focus on new religious movements.
- (b) Most candidate answers demonstrated some understanding of the Marxist theory of religion. High scoring responses provided a detailed explanation and assessment of the view that religion is a form of ideology for controlling the working class. There were some answers in the middle of the mark range that offered a sound account of the Marxist theory of religion while providing only a very limited assessment of the strengths and limitations of that theory.

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Key messages

- Sound knowledge of sociological explanations and theories demonstrated by many of the candidates.
- Scope for improvement in providing the analysis and assessment required to achieve high marks.
- Questions need to be interpreted more accurately in some cases.
- Opportunity to use more references to postmodernist theory.
- More use of relevant studies would be one way of gaining higher marks.

General comments

Many candidate answers demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the relevant topic areas and were able to offer analysis and evaluation of appropriate sociological explanations and theories. However, there are still many candidates who achieve marks no higher than the middle of the range largely because they produce answers that score well in terms of knowledge, but fall short in terms of providing analysis and assessment. For candidates in this category, the key requirement in order to gain higher marks is to develop the skills of manipulating and applying their knowledge in a way that provides a reasoned and well-argued response to the issues raised by the specific wording of each question.

Comments on specific questions

Questions 1

- (a) There were some good answers that explained several ways in which pupil subcultures may influence educational achievement. High scoring responses usually included references to relevant concepts, theories and studies. Low scoring answers often demonstrated some understanding of the concept of pupil subcultures without drawing relevant links with educational achievement.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of why some groups have better opportunities for educational achievement than other groups. High scoring responses also included a sustained assessment of the view that opportunities to achieve at School are limited to a few privileged groups. Lower scoring answers considered different explanations for levels of educational achievement, without offering an assessment of the view on which the question was based.

Questions 2

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the interactionist theory of education, focusing on the consequences of pupil and teacher interaction. There were some low scoring answers that discussed only one or two simple ways in which educational performance may be influenced by classroom interaction.
- (b) There were a few high-scoring answers that demonstrated a detailed understanding of how knowledge is socially constructed. Good responses also assessed the extent to which the social construction of knowledge favors some groups over others. Low scoring answers showed little awareness of what is meant by the social construction of knowledge.

Questions 3

- (a) Good answers provided a detailed account of why low income may be associated with poor health. Some high quality responses included references to relevant studies and thinkers. Low scoring answers were often confined to a simple account of one or two ways in which low income may impact on health.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of different types of aid and how they impact on global poverty. High scoring responses also included an assessment of the view that aid is ineffective in reducing global poverty. There were some low scoring answers that focused on the problems of eradicating poverty without making appropriate links to the relevance of aid programs.

Questions 4

- (a) There were some good answers that discussed a range of ways in which a society might be affected by rapid rural-urban migration. Lower scoring answers covered a narrower range of relevant points and often lacked references to relevant concepts and evidence.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the strengths and limitations of world systems theory.

Questions 5

- (a) There were some high scoring answers that discussed a range of examples of how women are represented in the media. Some good responses included references to appropriate studies and thinkers. Low scoring answers were often confined to discussing just one or two simple examples of how women are represented in the media.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a good account of the reasons why audiences may receive and interpret media messages in different ways. Good responses also included an assessment of the extent to which audience reception varies between different groups.

Questions 6

- (a) There were some good answers that considered several examples of how different types of media influence the way news is presented. Some candidates made effective use of references to relevant studies and thinkers. Low scoring answers demonstrated little understanding of sociological explanations for the way news is presented.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the concept of cultural hegemony and how it is used in different theories of the media. High scoring responses also included a sustained assessment of those theories.

Questions 7

- (a) Good answers explained in detail how religion may bring about social change. High scoring responses also often included references to appropriate concepts and theories. Some lower band answers discussed the role of religion in general, without direct reference to social change.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the secularisation thesis and also provided a sustained assessment of whether the power of organised religion is declining.

Questions 8

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that identified one or two relevant factors without describing them in any detail.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the functionalist theory of religion and also offered a sustained assessment. Answers in the middle of the mark range showed some understanding of the functionalist theory while lacking a convincing assessment. There were a few low scoring answers that were limited to a few observations about the role of religion in general.