

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11 Family

Key Messages

- 1 Plan the amount of time to spend on each question to reflect the number of marks that the question carries.
- 2 Keep answers to questions (a) and (b) short and focused on the question.
- 3 Pay attention to command words and keep bringing the answer back to the question.
- 4 Include relevant sociological evidence such as theory, reference to sociological studies and concepts, especially in extended answers.
- 5 In order to achieve a high mark in essays it is necessary to include evaluation as well as knowledge and understanding.

General comments

Most candidates answered all the required questions on the paper and there were few rubric errors. The topic childhood was reasonably well understood by most candidates, as were issues concerning family life in general.

Many candidates displayed a good knowledge and understanding of sociology including a wide range of general theory. In most cases, performance could be improved by applying relevant sociological theory, directly referencing sociological studies and referring to sociological concepts, especially in extended answers. Candidates need to take care when reading questions and pay particular attention to command the command words and key concepts.

Most answers to **Section A** received higher marks than **Section B** and this reflects the strength of the use of knowledge and understanding and the need to develop evaluation in **Section B**. Candidates could improve on their performance by including more relevant detail in their extended answers. Both sections carry 25 marks but in many cases answers to **Question 1** were longer than to the **Section B** essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The majority of candidates attempted all parts of **Section A**, achieving marks for each part of the question. Some candidates spent too much time on this section and then did not have enough time to fully develop an essay.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates not only identified the time frame within which childhood can be placed but also the way in which it can change by place and time. Most of these answers were succinct and accurate, recognising that the concept of childhood is socially constructed. A common error was to produce an over lengthy answer which included too much detail about what happens within childhood rather than a clear definition of the term.
- (b) A range of rights were identified of which education was the most popular. Others included health as well as protection from abuse or work at a young age. Some candidates included aspects of legal systems which are designed to protect children. Less successful responses lacked focus on rights and instead gave descriptions of childhood conditions.

- (c) The most successful responses focused clearly on why childhood may be longer in some societies than others. These responses concentrated on why the length of childhood is different in different places, using cross cultural studies, many making reference to the law. Some excellent answers used class, gender and ethnicity to show why childhood can be shorter or longer. Other effective answers contrasted developed with traditional societies. Some candidates not only supported their answer with sociological studies but also introduced a range of concepts such as helicopter parents. Some candidates only offered one reason in their response. The best responses gave three clear reasons with some development of each.
- (d) Candidates were very good at noting the ways in which childhood can be different and this was especially strong in relation to class but some responses were very generalised, relying on stereotypes and lacking sociological support. Some less successful responses described the effects of class upon life chances, but with no reference to childhood. Some excellent responses made good use of anthropological studies. Some responses which included good knowledge of how experiences of childhood vary were less successful at evaluation. The best responses assessed the extent to which experiences of childhood vary by discussing ways that experiences of childhood do not vary. Successful responses often looked at the common experience of socialisation or the increasing influence of the global media upon children.

Section B

All candidates attempted one essay from this section and many were detailed and thoughtful showing good use of sociological knowledge and evidence. Some answers lacked depth and specific sociological detail. **Question 2** was more popular than **Question 1**.

Question 2

Most candidates answered this question by examining functionalist views on the importance of the nuclear family for society. Some limited their answer to this, and argued that this proved that there was no decline. Other responses described different family types but did not interpret how this relates to the question of the decline of family life. More successful responses quoted a range of theory and/or empirical detail, explaining how this demonstrates the continued strength of family life. Many candidates were able to cover both sides of the debate, discussing how, for some sociologists, family life is in decline but for others it is simply changing. Some very successful responses explored this debate in relation to a variety of changes such as social, economic and legal changes, secularisation, divorce and marriage rates, the changing position of women in the family and changing family structures. Many supported their answers with a range of appropriate sociological evidence, both empirical and theoretical.

Question 3

Many candidates began by outlining functionalist views, arguing that in order for societies to run efficiently families must perform key universal functions. Many candidates supported this discussion with the ideas of Murdock and/or Parsons. Some candidates simply described alternative types as evidence to show that there are no universal features of family life. Others developed this with additional supporting evidence linked to diversity, including cultural, class and other factors helping to shape family features. Other approaches to the question included focussing on other universal features such as patriarchy, the female carer core, or moves towards symmetry. The very best answers questioned the assertion that family diversity means there are no universal features of family life, illustrating how some alternative family structures may be linked with or have developed from nuclear families. These answers often identified universal features within these diverse families; for example, referencing the postmodern view that diversity reflects (universal) choice.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Family

Key Messages

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- 4 Include relevant sociological evidence such as theory, reference to sociological studies and concepts, especially in extended answers.
- 5 In order to achieve a high mark in essays it is necessary to include evaluation as well as knowledge and understanding.

General comments

Many candidates displayed a good understanding of sociology including a wide range of general theory. The majority of candidates were able to include appropriate sociological knowledge and understanding, to varying degrees. In most cases, performance could be improved by applying relevant sociological theory, directly referencing sociological studies and referring to sociological concepts, especially in extended answers. Candidates should also read questions carefully paying particular attention to command words and key concepts used. There were some candidates who appeared to address the broad subject of a question without responding directly to the specific wording. Such answers tended to be rather descriptive and lack a clear understanding of what was being asked. Essay answers should be clearly focussed on the question and should link each point back to how the sociological knowledge used relates to the question set.

Some candidates used general knowledge, unsupported by sociological evidence; others had sociological material but they wrote everything they knew without focus on the question.

Most candidates answered all the questions and there were very few rubric errors. There was some limited evidence of rushed final answers.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

The stimulus material accompanying this question provided information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to what was being asked and to offer an appropriate response to each part of the question.

Question 1

- (a) Candidates had a good understanding of the meaning of culture and answers that gave a clear definition of youth and culture achieved full marks. Common errors were to just define culture or to describe what young people do rather than define youth culture. Other less successful answers explored the work of Aries and/or the concept of childhood with no clear connection to youth culture.
- (b) Education was correctly identified by many candidates as a reason why youth culture developed. Other answers referred to consumerism or the growth of the media in helping youth culture to develop. Many candidates only cited one valid reason for the development of youth culture and then did not develop it. In order to obtain full marks, a brief description needs to be included. A common error was to copy out sections of the data: the data is there to be benefit candidates, but candidates who select and apply the information to answer the question, not simply copy it out. The most successful answers were clearly focussed upon why youth culture developed and some very good answers focussed upon reasons that have led to an extended period of youth which has allowed a recognised youth culture to become established.
- (c) Successful answers described why youth cultures are different in different social groups rather than describing how they are different. The best of these took a range of factors such as class/wealth, gender and ethnicity as well as making cross-cultural comparisons. There was some excellent use of concepts such as bedroom culture in relation to comparisons of youth groups based on gender. Less successful answers listed accounts of the different ways in which people experience childhood in different societies rather than differing social groups. Some less successful responses has less focus on the specific question asked and instead discussed affluence and poverty and how these might influence an individual's ability to experience opportunity, or 'freedom of expression' in a particular society or family. This demonstrated some relevant sociological understanding and gained some reward.
- (d) The majority of candidates agreed that age was the main cause of tension and then outlined the ways in which that could be experienced. This was mainly through the perceived problems caused by the young or the burden of the elderly in families. Some more developed answers made good use of the tensions caused by ascribed and achieved status on family relationships. A number of candidates wrote very detailed answers that were supported by a range of different sociological perspectives. These included parents and children, ageing relatives and sons and daughters and/or grandchildren as well as siblings of differing ages. Other causes of tension in the family were commonly identified, such as unemployment, failing marital relationships, migration and traditional versus western cultural values, modernisation and child-centeredness and the 'pester-power' of children, and the use and development of new-technology. In order to gain the highest level in this question, evaluation is required. The most successful responses were from candidates who appeared to have clearly focussed on the question. Some of those who agreed that age was the main cause of tensions evaluated it by stating that age may not be the cause of tension in fact, in some families, age divisions may solve problems, for example with grandparents babysitting. More successful evaluative answers showed that although age may be a cause of tension another factor, usually gender, are more significant. Some well-developed answers explored the role of romantic and confluent love in causing family tension. Some very sophisticated responses reflected that age changes but gender remains, and so divisions based on gender are more significant.

Section B

Candidates were required to answer either **Question 2** or **Question 3** in this section of the paper, with **Question 2** being slightly more popular.

These questions were generally answered well by candidates. However, a number of candidates did appear to offer a rather hurried, or list-like, answer in this section of the paper. This, perhaps, indicated that they had not left sufficient time to respond effectively to what was being asked in their selected option question in **Section B**. Candidates need to be aware that section B of the paper is worth the same number of marks as **Section A**.

Question 2

Most candidates clearly understood that family life can damage some family members. This was usually explored through a discussion of the darker side of the family. This discussion often included evidence of abuse suffered by women but a few more detailed answers included reference to children and husbands.

Other candidates took the Marxist view that family life in a capitalist society is based on exploitation, though this was not always clearly linked to 'damaging'. Some less successful responses discussed whether the family benefits society, which was not the focus of the question. The best responses made reference to a range of feminist views about the family and some reflected upon how family life may be more harmful for women and more beneficial for men.

Question 3

The most successful responses to this question focussed clearly upon social class and not just gender equality in the family. Candidates should pay particular attention to the key terms used in essay questions and ensure they answer the specific question set. Some candidates also limited their answer to a consideration of conjugal roles whereas the best responses also looked at equality in the gender roles of children in families. Other answers concentrated on gender equality in society rather than in the family and some talked about the class system rather than class in relation to the family. The best responses evaluated the view that class is the most significant factor by explaining how social norms in a society are a key factor influencing gender equality, regardless of social class.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/13 Family

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

The majority of candidates attempted all parts of **Section A**, achieving marks for each part of the question. Some candidates spent too much time on this section and then did not have enough time to fully develop an essay.

Question 1

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- (b) A range of rights were identified of which education was the most popular. Others included health as well as protection from abuse or work at a young age. Some candidates included aspects of legal systems which are designed to protect children. Less successful responses lacked focus on rights and instead gave descriptions of childhood conditions.

- (c) The most successful responses focused clearly on why childhood may be longer in some societies than others. These responses concentrated on why the length of childhood is different in different places, using cross cultural studies, many making reference to the law. Some excellent answers used class, gender and ethnicity to show why childhood can be shorter or longer. Other effective answers contrasted developed with traditional societies. Some candidates not only supported their answer with sociological studies but also introduced a range of concepts such as helicopter parents. Some candidates only offered one reason in their response. The best responses gave three clear reasons with some development of each.
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Section B

All candidates attempted one essay from this section and many were detailed and thoughtful showing good use of sociological knowledge and evidence. Some answers lacked depth and specific sociological detail. **Question 2** was more popular than **Question 1**.

Question 2

Most candidates answered this question by examining functionalist views on the importance of the nuclear family for society. Some limited their answer to this, and argued that this proved that there was no decline. Other responses described different family types but did not interpret how this relates to the question of the decline of family life. More successful responses quoted a range of theory and/or empirical detail, explaining how this demonstrates the continued strength of family life. Many candidates were able to cover both sides of the debate, discussing how, for some sociologists, family life is in decline but for others it is simply changing. Some very successful responses explored this debate in relation to a variety of changes such as social, economic and legal changes, secularisation, divorce and marriage rates, the changing position of women in the family and changing family structures. Many supported their answers with a range of appropriate sociological evidence, both empirical and theoretical.

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Many candidates began by outlining functionalist views, arguing that in order for societies to run efficiently families must perform key universal functions. Many candidates supported this discussion with the ideas of Murdock and/or Parsons. Some candidates simply described alternative types as evidence to show that there are no universal features of family life. Others developed this with additional supporting evidence linked to diversity, including cultural, class and other factors helping to shape family features. Other approaches to the question included focussing on other universal features such as patriarchy, the female carer core, or moves towards symmetry. The very best answers questioned the assertion that family diversity means there are no universal features of family life, illustrating how some alternative family structures may be linked with or have developed from nuclear families. These answers often identified universal features within these diverse families; for example, referencing the postmodern view that diversity reflects (universal) choice.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/21 Theory and Methods

Key messages

- Answers must show sound knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories and evidence.
- The essay-type questions require evaluation of the view expressed in the question.
- Theoretical knowledge and understanding should be included, where appropriate.
- Accurate use of methodological concepts is important in research methods questions.

General comments

Centres should aim to develop candidates' skills in respect of the assessment objectives of each part of **Question 1**. For example, in **1(b)** many responses were too long for the number of marks available. Two concisely developed points is sufficient to achieve full marks for this question.

In **1(c)** there was some evidence of reliance on common sense responses. Candidates need to base their answers around sociological knowledge and understanding.

In the essay section the methodological question (**Question 2**) was far more popular than the theoretical one, but only the very best responses included appropriate methodological, theoretical, or empirical evidence to support their points. Centres should encourage their students to use studies to illustrate their points. There was ample opportunity to do this in **Question 2** on interviews but few responses included any appropriate references. A number of responses showed a reliance on reproducing learned material from textbooks without applying it carefully to the question. For example, statements such as 'Gouldner says sociology cannot be value free' were simply asserted before moving on to the next point. Evaluation continues to be a skill that not all candidates are confident in with many only demonstrating it in juxtaposition.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates found this question difficult and there was clearly a deficit in understanding of the term. A number of responses were awarded 1 mark for providing an explanation of its meaning in the context of the stem although few were able to provide an explicit definition.
- (b) This question proved to be straightforward for most candidates and the majority were at least able to identify two factors; most commonly time and funding available, and quite often theoretical perspective. However, these points were not always then clearly linked to a reason for choosing particular methods.
- (c) Most responses focussed on the impact of bias occurring during interaction with respondents – interviewer effect, etc. although these were not always explicit on how it was a researcher's values rather than, for example, their characteristics or practical limitations that were causing bias. There were relatively few references to how the theoretical perspectives that sociologists adopt may have built-in biases, as might have been expected. Less successful responses provided rather simplistic notions of researchers who ask unlikely leading questions or intentionally distort data. Many responses included evaluation in their answer which is not necessary in this question.

- (d) Most candidates were able to give a reasonably sound outline of a positivist approach and contrast this with an interpretivist approach and/or some of the practical ways in which values and bias generally make findings less objective. The strongest responses focussed their attention fully on the 'should be value free' wording of the question while others drifted back and forward between *can* be and *should* be value free. A number of responses mistakenly portrayed Weber's approach to the issue of in seeking to understand another's subjective meaning as necessarily meaning one is biased, or as many candidates implied, intentionally 'value-laden'. Surprisingly, there were few references to feminists and Marxists, although Oakley's research was occasionally mentioned.

Section B

Question 2

Most responses demonstrated a sound understanding of different types of interview and some of their strengths and limitations. Unstructured and structured interviews were usually the main focus, with also frequent consideration of semi-structured and group interviews. There were a number of good answers which linked all of these to theoretical perspectives and/or included insights into the practical issues arising out of the research processes. A number of strong responses also explained clearly that some issues applied to all types of interviews while a few. Some less successful responses compared interviews in general to other research methods. There were relatively few references to empirical research using interviews which would have enhanced responses to this question. A number of responses inappropriately cited chat-show hosts as examples of interview technique.

Question 3

There were a range of approaches to this question. Some focussed on the major theories of socialisation and contrasted their views as expected. However, others took 'how people perform social roles' to mean any of the subject matter of sociology and therefore focussed on the interpretivist perspective generally – often mainly its research methods, in contrast to other perspectives, positivist or structuralist. This approach received some credit but on its own did not allow candidates to discuss the central issues raised by the question. Others discussed socialisation in general, but without sufficient clarity about whether, for instance, feminist views on the acquisition of gender roles or neo-Marxist views on learning to be obedient workers, supported the interpretivist view or not. Of those who did look at Mead, Cooley, Goffman etc., some gave excellent explanations, that were applied to the question effectively, but several reproduced textbook statements without really showing how the concepts have added to our understanding. Some legitimately contrasted biological or psychological approaches. Few candidates found an overall evaluation very easy on this question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22 Theory and Methods

Key messages

- Answers must show sound knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories and evidence.
- The essay-type questions require evaluation of the view expressed in the question.
- Theoretical knowledge and understanding should be included, where appropriate.
- Accurate use of methodological concepts is important in research methods questions.

General comments

There were many successful responses which included an appropriate mix of explanation and evaluation. The most successful responses were also characterised by good application of a range of relevant sociological evidence and theory. There was little difference in the standard of responses between **Section A** and **Section B**. Nevertheless, Centres should aim to develop candidates' skills in respect of the assessment objectives of each part of **Question 1**. For example, in **1(b)** many responses were too long for the number of marks available. Two concisely developed points is sufficient to achieve full marks for this question.

In the essay section the methodological question (**Question 2**) was far more popular than the theoretical question. Most candidates were able to apply theories appropriately to the questions. Some evaluation remains rather juxtaposed; higher marks are awarded when candidates focus their evaluation directly on the view expressed in the question, but this was only evident in the most successful responses. The key methodological concepts of validity, reliability and representativeness were used accurately by many candidates but others included them indiscriminately and without explanation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most responses showed a sound understanding of the term *hypothesis* and were able to develop their answer enough to gain full marks. Many well-answered responses outlined the notion of a hypothesis as a preliminary idea or prediction requiring the confirmation of empirical research. Interestingly, a number of candidates who did not gain marks in this question showed that they understand the meaning of the term in **1(d)** but failed to explain it clearly in this question.
- (b) Most candidates could clearly identify two methods correctly usually developing them appropriately, although sometimes spending longer than necessary on this. Participant observation and unstructured interviews were the most popular examples. A number of responses were not always clear about the method they were describing e.g. they did not specify which type of interview they were outlining, or their development points were insufficient. Structured interview was often mistakenly included as an example. A few candidates misunderstood the term or confused qualitative and quantitative.

- (c) Successful responses were often able to explain a range of issues and relate these to the concept of validity. The most successful responses drew in other issues which complicate the process of understanding behaviour such as the challenges of discussing sensitive and personal issues. Many candidates selected one key point and were able to elaborate on it effectively but did not always supplement this with other substantive points. While most answers were able to identify some form of practical problem in research such as time or cost, the connection made to 'understanding human behaviour' needed greater development in many cases.
- (d) This question was handled confidently with evidence of good knowledge and some effective evaluation. Successful answers explained the scientific model well, while also applying it to sociology and showing its limitations. The most successful responses were able to contextualise the answer in terms of the hypothetico-deductive model of research and connect it to central ideas in positivist research such as objectivity, value freedom, generalisation and systematic research. Less successful responses opted to make a comparison of quantitative and qualitative methods in sociology, while others spent most of the time focusing on theories of natural science. Some candidates incorrectly assumed that 'scientific' just meant laboratory experiments, while others assumed questionnaires are scientific but without discussing why. The key concepts of validity and reliability were not always used accurately.

Section B

Question 2

Many responses to this popular question, demonstrated good knowledge of the types of observation and of questionnaires and the main advantages and disadvantages of each. Many candidates linked each method to a theoretical perspective, but more marks could have been gained by showing the reasons for those links in greater depth. An encouraging number of substantive participant observation studies were used to illustrate points, but more often the 'danger of death' type problem was emphasised rather than examples of the interesting insights gained. Critical appraisals of the view that observational studies will always produce more interesting findings than questionnaires were seldom encountered. Even the best responses tended to focus mainly on a general evaluation of the methods rather than on the degree of interest of their findings. Very few responses noted that questionnaire-based research can sometimes identify social patterns and trends that had hitherto been unrecognised. Triangulation featured heavily in concluding statements. Sometimes this was applied to good effect although candidates should be wary of introducing this idea unless they have a clear sense of how it contributes to their answer in evaluative terms.

Question 3

The most successful responses to this question gave well-focussed discussions of the ideas of Durkheim and Parsons explicitly related these to how people may be controlled by external forces. Less successful responses simply outlined broadly functionalist ideas with little relation to the question, or gave vague summaries of how people learn roles and rules. Some otherwise very good answers moved too quickly into discussing other perspectives, exploring Marxist and feminist perspectives on social control and interactionist and post-modernist criticisms. This approach was relevant, especially when it was explicitly linked to the view expressed in the question, but more was often needed on functionalism. Some very good responses were able to show how external forces are mediated, though not removed, by actors' interpretations but generally this type of response was in the minority.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/23 Theory and Methods

Key messages

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates found this question difficult and there was clearly a deficit in understanding of the term. A number of responses were awarded 1 mark for providing an explanation of its meaning in the context of the stem although few were able to provide an explicit definition.
- (b) This question proved to be straightforward for most candidates and the majority were at least able to identify two factors; most commonly time and funding available, and quite often theoretical perspective. However, these points were not always then clearly linked to a reason for choosing particular methods.
- (c) Most responses focussed on the impact of bias occurring during interaction with respondents – interviewer effect, etc. although these were not always explicit on how it was a researcher's values rather than, for example, their characteristics or practical limitations that were causing bias. There were relatively few references to how the theoretical perspectives that sociologists adopt may have built-in biases, as might have been expected. Less successful responses provided rather simplistic notions of researchers who ask unlikely leading questions or intentionally distort data. Many responses included evaluation in their answer which is not necessary in this question.

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Section B

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There were a range of approaches to this question. Some focussed on the major theories of socialisation and contrasted their views as expected. However, others took 'how people perform social roles' to mean any of the subject matter of sociology and therefore focussed on the interpretivist perspective generally – often mainly its research methods, in contrast to other perspectives, positivist or structuralist. This approach received some credit but on its own did not allow candidates to discuss the central issues raised by the question. Others discussed socialisation in general, but without sufficient clarity about whether, for instance, feminist views on the acquisition of gender roles or neo-Marxist views on learning to be obedient workers, supported the interpretivist view or not. Of those who did look at Mead, Cooley, Goffman etc., some gave excellent explanations, that were applied to the question effectively, but several reproduced textbook statements without really showing how the concepts have added to our understanding. Some legitimately contrasted biological or psychological approaches. Few candidates found an overall evaluation very easy on this question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/31 Paper 31

Key messages

- Good answers often used examples and evidence from studies to support key points.
- References to relevant concepts and theories were used well in high scoring answers.
- Low scoring answers often relied on assertion and personal opinion.
- Knowledge of theories is still weak among some candidates.
- Answers to the **(b)** questions often lacked evidence of assessment.

General comments

While many candidates made good use of sociological concepts and theories to support their answers, others relied too much on personal observation and general knowledge. Answers that lack references to appropriate sociological sources inevitably gain only low marks. Knowledge of the main sociological theories was evident in the work of many of the candidates, though higher marks could be gained through a better understanding of different strands of thought within each theory. High scoring answers often made good use of examples and research evidence to illustrate key points; this approach is to be encouraged as one way in which candidates can improve their chances of success in the examination. Weakness in providing assessment was a major reason why some candidates were unable to secure high marks for the **(b)** questions. Candidates may benefit from more opportunity to practise the skills required in providing a good assessment as part of their exam preparation work. There were few rubric errors and most candidates were able to answer three questions fully in the time available.

Comments on specific questions

- 1 (a)** There were some high quality answers to this question that distinguished between different types of IQ test and many used research evidence to analyse the limitations of this approach to measuring intelligence. Some lower scoring answers considered the difficulties of measuring intelligence without making reference to IQ tests.
- (b)** Good answers often used the functionalist perspective to support the view that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve educational success in modern industrial societies. High scoring responses also included an assessment of the view on which the question was based. Marxist and feminist theories of education were often used to develop a critical perspective on the idea that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve educational success in modern industrial societies. There were a few low scoring answers that relied on general knowledge and/or personal opinion to discuss the issues raised by the question.
- 2 (a)** There were some lower scoring answers that merely described different pupil subcultures. Better answers focused on explaining why different pupil subcultures exist. High scoring responses often used references to relevant studies to support their analysis of pupil subcultures.
- (b)** Most candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss the work of Bowles and Gintis and their correspondence theory in particular. Good answers explained the thinking behind the view that schools exist to produce the next generation of obedient workers, and also provided an assessment of the strengths and limitations of this viewpoint. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the functions of schools in general, with little or no reference to the reproduction of the workforce.

- 3 (a)** Most of the candidates were able to distinguish between at least two different definitions of poverty, usually absolute and relative poverty. High scoring responses offered accurate explanations of the differences between absolute and relative poverty; some also referred to other definitions of poverty, including subjective, cultural and material poverty.
- (b)** There were a few high scoring answers to this question that made good use of relevant studies to assess whether TNCs are an obstacle to development. Answers in the middle of the mark range generally made less use of examples from studies and covered only a relatively narrow range of points. There were a few low scoring answers that discussed obstacles to development in general rather than focussing on TNCs.
- 4 (a)** Most of the candidates who attempted this question were able to identify a few consequences for urban areas of high levels of rural-urban migration. High scoring answers explained the consequences in an accurate and detailed way, sometimes using evidence from studies to support their points. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed the consequences of migration in general rather than focusing on rural-urban migration.
- (b)** There were a lot of answers in the middle of the mark range that discussed different theories of modernisation without emphasising the contribution of cultural factors. High scoring responses recognised that cultural factors play a greater role in some theories of modernisation than in others, and they made this point central to their analysis. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a few broad points about the influence on development, with no conceptual or theoretical structure to the analysis.
- 5 (a)** There were some high scoring answers that identified several ways in which access to the new media may enable people to challenge government authority. Many candidates made good use of examples to show how the new media has been used in different societies to expose and pressurise governments. There were some lower scoring answers that ignored the reference to 'new media' and instead discussed how the media in general might be used to challenge government.
- (b)** Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the Marxist theory of the media and the ideas of Althusser in particular. High scoring responses included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based, often contrasting Marxist ideas with other theories of the media, such as those contributed by pluralist and postmodernist thinkers. There were a few low scoring ideas that examined the role of the media, without making clear links to the idea of state ideological control.
- 6 (a)** There were some high scoring answers to this question that explained in detail several ways in which news presentation may be influenced by the decisions of editors and journalists. Answers in the middle of the mark range were less detailed and often lacked references to relevant concepts and studies. There were a few low scoring answers that considered different influences on news presentation with little or no reference to the input of editors and journalists.
- (b)** Most of the candidates were able to discuss at least some aspects of the post-modernist contribution to the study of the media. High scoring responses showed a detailed understanding of post-modernist theories, referring to appropriate thinkers, concepts and arguments. Good answers also included an assessment of the post-modernist contribution, often drawing appropriate contrasts with other theories of the media, such as the functionalist and Marxist accounts. There were a few answers at the lower end of the mark range that demonstrated only a very limited understanding of post-modernist thinking.
- 7 (a)** Good answers to this question explained clearly and accurately the links between social deprivation and the growth of new religious movements. There were some lower scoring answers that explored reasons for the growth of new religious movements without making effective use of the concept of social deprivation.

- (b) Many of the candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss the functionalist theory of religion and to contrast it with other theories, such as the Marxist and post-modernist accounts. High scoring responses provided a sustained assessment of the view that religion is essential for social order, often using references to studies and examples to illustrate key points. There were a lot of answers in the middle of the mark, relying heavily on just description. These responses tended to summarise the functionalist theory of religion without developing much by way of analysis and assessment.
- 8 (a) While there were a few good answers to this question, there were a lot that demonstrated little understanding of how the concept of religion is defined by sociologists. Good answers often distinguished between inclusive and exclusive definitions, and some made good use of the definitions of religion provided by Durkheim, Malinowski, Engels, and Wilson.
- (b) There were some good answers to this question that examined whether people are becoming less religious and/or whether the forms in which people practice religion are changing. High scoring responses offered a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based, drawing on appropriate references to studies, concepts and theories. There were some lower scoring answers that lacked references to sociological sources and relied instead on personal observation and general knowledge.

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Key messages

- More evidence of analysis and evaluation required to gain high marks.
- Some effective use of research findings to support key points.
- High scoring answers demonstrated a good knowledge of concepts and theories.
- Some low scoring answers relied on general knowledge rather than references to relevant sociological evidence and arguments.
- Global development questions attracted more answers than in the previous session.

General Comments

The majority of the candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the relevant sociological concepts, theories, and arguments. Some went further by also demonstrating good analysis and evaluation skills. To gain high marks in the examination, it is essential that answers go beyond merely the repetition of relevant textbook knowledge to include well-reasoned arguments, insightful analysis of issues, and conclusions that are convincing and well supported. In order to achieve this high standard, candidates may benefit from more practise in constructing analytical and evaluative answers to the part **(b)** questions in particular.

While most of the candidates seemed aware of the need to use recognised sociological sources in answering the questions, some relied instead on personal opinion and general knowledge. Answers that are based mainly, or solely, on general knowledge merit only low marks. While the questions on education and religion proved most popular, there was an increase in the number of candidates choosing to answer the questions on global development. The media questions attracted slightly more responses than the global development questions, but were not particularly well answered overall.

Comments on specific questions

- 1 (a) Good answers identified several ways in which traditional ideas of masculinity may affect the educational performance of working class boys. Lower scoring answers often lacked references to traditional ideas of masculinity and explained instead other influences on the educational performance of working class boys.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the hidden curriculum and how it might affect the educational performance of girls. However, a lot of candidates demonstrated only a weak understanding of the hidden curriculum. High scoring responses included an assessment of the importance of the hidden curriculum relative to other factors affecting the educational performance of girls.
- 2 (a) There were a few high quality answers that explained the concept of compensatory education and then demonstrated why programmes of compensatory education often fail to improve the educational performance of disadvantaged groups. Many of the answers showed little understanding of the concept of compensatory education and therefore scored only low marks. Answers towards the lower end of the mark range often relied on a basic summary of a few reasons why disadvantaged groups may struggle to succeed educationally.

- (b) There were a lot of good answers to this question. Most of the candidates were able to identify several reasons why poverty may be an obstacle to educational achievement. Good answers often considered both cultural and material factors linked to poverty that might impact on a student's educational performance. Responses that triggered the top mark band also included a sustained assessment of the extent to which poverty is the main obstacle to educational equality. Some candidates argued that ethnicity and/or gender are obstacles to educational equality that are just as formidable as poverty.
- 3 (a) Good answers explained several reasons why it might be difficult to control the birth rate in developing countries. A range of relevant cultural, social, environmental and economic factors were covered in the highest scoring answers. Answers that merited the lower part of the mark range were often limited to identifying just one or two relevant factors, with little detail.
- (b) There were a lot of answers that triggered the middle of the mark range by identifying several ways in which environmental concerns could have a negative impact on development. Higher scoring responses went further by showing why environmental concerns should be taken into account when formulating models of development. Typically, these answers highlighted the limitations of purely economic models of development. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the problems of development in general, with little or no references to environmental concerns.
- 4 (a) There were a lot of good answers that demonstrated a sound understanding of Rostow's version of modernisation theory. The highest scoring responses also referred to other contributions to modernisation theory, such as Weber, Parsons and contemporary ideas about the spread of free market capitalism. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated only a very limited understanding of the nature of modernisation theory.
- (b) There were some answers in the middle of the mark range that discussed the causes of poverty in developing countries with little or no reference to global capitalism specifically. High quality responses, by contrast, focused specifically on the influence of global capitalism and whether it is the main cause of poverty in developing countries. There were some low scoring answers that offered only a few general observations about the nature of poverty.
- 5 (a) There were some good answers to this question that discussed the ways that a number of different social groups may use the media. Useful distinctions were often made between different age groups, social classes, and ethnic groups. There were also some low scoring answers that wrongly interpreted the question as an opportunity to discuss media representations of different social groups.
- (b) Many of the answers in the middle of the mark range discussed the powers of the government to control the media in general rather than the new media specifically. Higher scoring responses focused on the new media and examined several ways in which governments may seek to control these new forms of communication, assessing their success. There were some low scoring answers that described the new media without providing relevant links to the issues of power and government control.
- 6 (a) Good answers to this question demonstrated an accurate understanding of several strengths and limitations of using content analysis to study the media. However, there were a lot of responses that showed only limited understanding of what is meant by content analysis. Some candidates confused the term with semiotics. There were a few low scoring answers that discussed media content rather than the research approach known as content analysis.
- (b) Most of the candidates recognised correctly that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the pluralist theory of the media. Good answers compared the pluralist theory with other theories of media content, including the Marxist and postmodernist accounts. There were some answers in the middle of the mark range that demonstrated a sound understanding of the pluralist theory, but lacked an assessment of the strengths and limitations of that theory. Low scoring answers lacked references to relevant theories and concepts and instead relied on general knowledge to discuss the influences on media content.
- 7 (a) There were a lot of good answers to this question. High quality responses identified several ways in which religion may support male interests and used examples from particular religions to develop the analysis. There were a few low scoring answers that offered only a few brief points about the relationship between religion and gender inequality.

- (b)** Most candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss the secularisation thesis. High scoring answers examined several arguments for and against the thesis, focusing in particular on the issue of whether religion has lost its importance in public life. Answers in the middle of the mark range covered a narrower range of arguments for and against the secularisation thesis, and the points made often lacked support from studies and research evidence. There were a few low scoring answers that lacked references to sociological sources, using only general knowledge and personal opinion to address the question.
- 8 (a)** Good answers to this question used a range of examples to show how religion may act as a form of false consciousness. Lower scoring responses often left the links between false consciousness and religion only loosely explained. A few candidates demonstrated little or no understanding of the concept of false consciousness.
- (b)** There were some very good answers to this question that demonstrated a detailed understanding of several different explanations for the growth in fundamentalist religions. High scoring responses also made effective use of the concept of desacrilisation in developing their analysis. Lower scoring answers were often confined to just one or two basic explanations for the growth of fundamentalist religions. Some candidates appeared not to understand the concept of desacrilisation.

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Key messages

- Good answers often used examples and evidence from studies to support key points.
- References to relevant concepts and theories were used well in high scoring answers.
- Low scoring answers often relied on assertion and personal opinion.
- Knowledge of theories is still weak among some candidates.
- Answers to the **(b)** questions often lacked evidence of assessment.

General comments

While many candidates made good use of sociological concepts and theories to support their answers, others relied too much on personal observation and general knowledge. Answers that lack references to appropriate sociological sources inevitably gain only low marks. Knowledge of the main sociological theories was evident in the work of many of the candidates, though higher marks could be gained through a better understanding of different strands of thought within each theory. High scoring answers often made good use of examples and research evidence to illustrate key points; this approach is to be encouraged as one way in which candidates can improve their chances of success in the examination. Weakness in providing assessment was a major reason why some candidates were unable to secure high marks for the **(b)** questions. Candidates may benefit from more opportunity to practise the skills required in providing a good assessment as part of their exam preparation work. There were few rubric errors and most candidates were able to answer three questions fully in the time available.

Comments on specific questions

- 1 (a) There were some high quality answers to this question that distinguished between different types of IQ test and many used research evidence to analyse the limitations of this approach to measuring intelligence. Some lower scoring answers considered the difficulties of measuring intelligence without making reference to IQ tests.
- (b) Good answers often used the functionalist perspective to support the view that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve educational success in modern industrial societies. High scoring responses also included an assessment of the view on which the question was based. Marxist and feminist theories of education were often used to develop a critical perspective on the idea that all pupils have the same opportunity to achieve educational success in modern industrial societies. There were a few low scoring answers that relied on general knowledge and/or personal opinion to discuss the issues raised by the question.
- 2 (a) There were some lower scoring answers that merely described different pupil subcultures. Better answers focused on explaining why different pupil subcultures exist. High scoring responses often used references to relevant studies to support their analysis of pupil subcultures.
- (b) Most candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss the work of Bowles and Gintis and their correspondence theory in particular. Good answers explained the thinking behind the view that schools exist to produce the next generation of obedient workers, and also provided an assessment of the strengths and limitations of this viewpoint. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the functions of schools in general, with little or no reference to the reproduction of the workforce.

- 3 (a)** Most of the candidates were able to distinguish between at least two different definitions of poverty, usually absolute and relative poverty. High scoring responses offered accurate explanations of the differences between absolute and relative poverty; some also referred to other definitions of poverty, including subjective, cultural and material poverty.
- (b)** There were a few high scoring answers to this question that made good use of relevant studies to assess whether TNCs are an obstacle to development. Answers in the middle of the mark range generally made less use of examples from studies and covered only a relatively narrow range of points. There were a few low scoring answers that discussed obstacles to development in general rather than focussing on TNCs.
- 4 (a)** Most of the candidates who attempted this question were able to identify a few consequences for urban areas of high levels of rural-urban migration. High scoring answers explained the consequences in an accurate and detailed way, sometimes using evidence from studies to support their points. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed the consequences of migration in general rather than focusing on rural-urban migration.
- (b)** There were a lot of answers in the middle of the mark range that discussed different theories of modernisation without emphasising the contribution of cultural factors. High scoring responses recognised that cultural factors play a greater role in some theories of modernisation than in others, and they made this point central to their analysis. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a few broad points about the influence on development, with no conceptual or theoretical structure to the analysis.
- 5 (a)** There were some high scoring answers that identified several ways in which access to the new media may enable people to challenge government authority. Many candidates made good use of examples to show how the new media has been used in different societies to expose and pressurise governments. There were some lower scoring answers that ignored the reference to 'new media' and instead discussed how the media in general might be used to challenge government.
- (b)** Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the Marxist theory of the media and the ideas of Althusser in particular. High scoring responses included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based, often contrasting Marxist ideas with other theories of the media, such as those contributed by pluralist and postmodernist thinkers. There were a few low scoring ideas that examined the role of the media, without making clear links to the idea of state ideological control.
- 6 (a)** There were some high scoring answers to this question that explained in detail several ways in which news presentation may be influenced by the decisions of editors and journalists. Answers in the middle of the mark range were less detailed and often lacked references to relevant concepts and studies. There were a few low scoring answers that considered different influences on news presentation with little or no reference to the input of editors and journalists.
- (b)** Most of the candidates were able to discuss at least some aspects of the post-modernist contribution to the study of the media. High scoring responses showed a detailed understanding of post-modernist theories, referring to appropriate thinkers, concepts and arguments. Good answers also included an assessment of the post-modernist contribution, often drawing appropriate contrasts with other theories of the media, such as the functionalist and Marxist accounts. There were a few answers at the lower end of the mark range that demonstrated only a very limited understanding of post-modernist thinking.
- 7 (a)** Good answers to this question explained clearly and accurately the links between social deprivation and the growth of new religious movements. There were some lower scoring answers that explored reasons for the growth of new religious movements without making effective use of the concept of social deprivation.

- (b) Many of the candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss the functionalist theory of religion and to contrast it with other theories, such as the Marxist and post-modernist accounts. High scoring responses provided a sustained assessment of the view that religion is essential for social order, often using references to studies and examples to illustrate key points. There were a lot of answers in the middle of the mark, relying heavily on just description. These responses tended to summarise the functionalist theory of religion without developing much by way of analysis and assessment.
- 8 (a) While there were a few good answers to this question, there were a lot that demonstrated little understanding of how the concept of religion is defined by sociologists. Good answers often distinguished between inclusive and exclusive definitions, and some made good use of the definitions of religion provided by Durkheim, Malinowski, Engels, and Wilson.
- (b) There were some good answers to this question that examined whether people are becoming less religious and/or whether the forms in which people practice religion are changing. High scoring responses offered a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based, drawing on appropriate references to studies, concepts and theories. There were some lower scoring answers that lacked references to sociological sources and relied instead on personal observation and general knowledge.